

## Missing Person Search Plan

This Missing Person Search Plan is a guide for the Day Organiser's own planning.

### Responsibility

- The Organiser will be responsible for coordinating the search for a missing person
- He will be assisted by the Controller and Planner.
- Contact BOF Chief Executive (07966 305800) before speaking to the media.
- Keep detailed written records, including times, for all information received, decisions made, instructions given, communications, etc.

### Pre-event planning

- a. A lot of background information should be contained in the "EVENT FILE" This will be referenced in the following notes by "EF"
- b. How will we search for a missing competitor? Before the event, make a plan of how you would organise search for a missing competitor. Base the plan on this procedure, the nature of the terrain, access points, roads and major tracks, safety bearing, time of year. Keep notes in the EF, so they are readily available.
- c. Ensure that there is at least one member of the download team who knows how to operate the downloading of data from all SI boxes -- check, clear, start, finish and control boxes. This is important as it enables you to narrow down the search area.
- d. In exposed terrain and poor weather conditions, it is worthwhile arranging for the Start and Check Boxes to be swapped halfway through the start period, so that we can identify early starters who have not returned within sensible times.
- e. Can the SI team access the Entry Form, if entry was done on-line?
- f. Radios can make a big difference to the efficiency of a search, but make sure that the batteries are not running down at the end of the day just when you most need them.
- g. Check mobile phone signals in the competition area (Planner and Controller) Record in EF
- h. Have a set of course maps and an all-controls map readily available
- i. Similarly, OS maps extracts of the area.
- j. Be ready to log information of the reporting person, missing person, details of the search teams etc and events as they happen. Use pen and waterproof paper, voice recorder device etc. You will need this information to write up any report.
- k. Have BOF Accident Report Form available.
- l. Discuss the Missing Person Search Plan with the controller.

### ALERT

The Organiser will be alerted to the fact that someone is missing.

- a. The Download team report someone who has started but has not downloaded and is unusually late.
- b. A friend or relative reports a missing person.

### CHECKS

- a. Double check download records and then the Finish and Final Control SI boxes.
- b. Any car keys left at download/enquiries?
- c. Any cars still in car park? If not, then the missing person has gone home.

- d. Any competitor still in Assembly or car park? In toilets, at caterers, on string course, etc.
- e. Any report of competitor in trouble received at Enquiries or Download?
- f. Obtain "entry form" details. Do you have contact phone number?

## ACTION

- a. Make a decision as to whether they are simply a bit overdue or seriously missing. Either way, get some preliminary information about the competitor, e.g. name, age, appearance, experience, personality (will they persist, come what may? Are they competent or just not a good enough navigator?) course, start time etc. Entry form details. Write it down! Obtain map of relevant course. Note name and contact details of person reporting missing runner.
- b. Start keeping written records, regarding: information received; decisions made; action taken. All with times and names of people involved. Use a scribe if someone is available.
- c. It could be appropriate to just wait – the missing competitor will almost invariably appear, having come to no harm. In the meantime check again that they are really missing
- d. Reassure relatives/friends; if necessary appoint someone to look after them. Continue throughout the incident
- e. Establish an Emergency Control point e.g. separate tent, corner of marquee, First Aid vehicle.
- f. Organiser to stay at Emergency Control point
- g. If the Organiser feels that there are genuine reasons for being worried then he/she needs to prepare to take positive action. It is essential that the strategy for this has been worked out before the event. Tasks to be done include: • Gathering information. • Controlling the progress of the initial search. • Seeking leaders for search teams. • Liaison with other organisations (e.g. police, mountain rescue).
- h. The following factors should influence whether or not to search: • age and/or experience of the competitor (both young and elderly) • amount of daylight left • weather currently & forecasted • known medical condition • density of competitors still in the terrain • nature of the terrain • Elapsed time • Time of year
- i. Send someone round the course backwards. It is important that they don't become missing as well. The 'searcher' should only set out with the Organiser's permission, adequately equipped. Searchers should work in pairs, with radio and/or phone and with clear instructions about returning by a certain time. The 'searcher' should never be the sole parent or guardian of a missing child, who should always remain at the assembly/finish in order to look after the child on their return. Record teams, timings and actions etc
- j. Similarly, send someone to run or cycle the paths/tracks that surround the area of the relevant course.
- k. **We can conduct a preliminary search ourselves but a detailed search should be managed by properly trained Mountain Rescue personnel. The M.R.** will still need people to help with a search, so hang on to as many club members as possible. Ring police (112 or 999) in order to put M.R. on alert and advise that we may call them out later, as the situation

develops. Inform the Police that you are searching, as they prefer an early warning, especially if the missing person is a junior

- l. **What should be done next? DELEGATE TASKS WHERE POSSIBLE** • Build up as much information as possible. • Check obvious places • check the start list and finish list again to make sure the person really is missing. • Get a good description of the person, both physical and psychological. • Alert potential searchers, control collectors and others, either to wait, or to go home for extra clothing, head torch, food and then return • Deal with the needs of friends and relatives. • Quiz finishers to check if anyone has seen the missing competitor or anything unusual. • Drive round the area on peripheral roads • If a safety bearing was given, check the route back that a person following that instruction would have taken • Interrogate all the control boxes on the missing runner's course to identify the last control visited by that runner.
  
- m. **How should a search be conducted.** • Which areas have the highest probabilities of containing the competitor? Which areas contain the riskier terrain? This is where interrogating control boxes will be very useful • There are two methods of search
  - Ribbon searching – this only covers linear features and the land on either side. A competitor injured in the middle of a thick block of forest may still be found by ribbon searching if they use their whistle or shout for help. Following the competitor's course is a sort of ribbon search but may be difficult whenever there is a route choice.
  - Sectoring – this involves a comprehensive sweep search of selected pieces of land. This is where trained M.R. personnel will be needed . Call police (999) and ask for Mountain Rescue assistance. Have full details to hand. Clear instructions and maps will be needed. Remember to record times and actions
  
- n. Think about food and welfare for those who are involved in a long search operation. They may need to go home first to get better clothing, more food, head torch, etc. Are the searchers' families being informed that they will be late home?

#### The Aftermath

- a. Check all searchers are back safely and can get home.
- b. Complete a BOF Accident Report Form and send it to British Orienteering office as soon as possible as directed on the form.
- c. Keep all records/logs of the incident safe.
- d. A post incident debrief for all involved is strongly recommended