



The Mountaineering Council of Scotland
www.mcofs.org.uk

Winter Check List

This card contains important information for all hill walkers and mountaineers who venture into the UK Mountains in winter conditions.

Due to a number of factors (such as weather, avalanche, navigation difficulty & the technical difficulty of dealing with snow & ice), the risk of being involved in an accident is potentially higher than in summer conditions.

Adopt a progressive approach to adventure and develop your skills incrementally by building on past experience.

- **Preparation is crucial.** Check the weather forecast. The wind speed and its direction are particularly important. Check the avalanche report. How does the detail relate to your route?
- **Is your route** significantly further or harder than other routes which you have successfully completed? Research your route and identify any hazards.
- **Is your route realistic** in the prevailing weather conditions? Can you get back before poor weather sets in? Poor weather might arrive earlier than expected. Is it likely to be dark?
- **Don't rely totally on someone else's experience or ability.**
- **Have an alternative, easier option in mind** in case the weather and conditions are not as good as you expected and be prepared to turn back.
- **Develop the technical skills for winter on less serious terrain first.** Navigation, avalanche awareness, ice axe and crampon skills take time to acquire.
- **Are you going onto steep ground?** There may be people above you. Consider the consequences of snow, ice or rock being knocked down onto you, or someone falling off above you. Be aware of the consequences of a slip. Consider wearing a helmet.
- **Have you told someone where you are going?** - And what to do if you fail to return. Be sure to inform them when you return.
- **Essential equipment to take with you:** Boots (stiff soled); crampons (that fit securely); ice axe; waterproof jacket with hood; waterproof trousers; gaiters; spare layer (fleece top); warm hat & Buff or balaclava; mitts or gloves (and spares); compass; map; watch; goggles; head torch; food & drink; emergency survival bag (orange poly bag is good); whistle; small first aid kit; group shelter.

Plus a large duvet/barrier jacket for extra warmth if you are stationary for any period of time.

- Your **mobile phone** won't stop an accident, but it might make it easier to get help – so take it. Take a look at the emergency procedures advice on the MCofS website.
- **Is your climbing partner or group as well equipped as you are?** Do they share the same aspirations for the day ahead? Be wary of letting anyone turn back alone from a remote location or in difficult conditions.