

Safe Hashing

A guide to staying safe on the trail.

Many of the trails we use are safe and easy to follow. Some however, are a little more difficult, and heavy rain and fading light can cause problems, particularly if the hare has been inventive and has added some difficult checks and rough terrain to test us!

There is therefore a risk that hashers could become separated from the pack and find themselves lost, with fading light, unsure of the way home. These 10 simple steps will improve your chances of getting back to the run site safely before the beer runs out!

1. **Stay on Paper!**

We follow paper, that's what we do. Many people think it's okay to take a short cut, because you know the area, or you feel a little too tired to do the whole trail, or for many other reasons. The problem is, if you go off paper, no-one has any idea where you are! Even if you are seen leaving the trail, once you are out of sight, you could be anywhere, making it very difficult for a search team to find you.

2. **Leave your car keys at the run site.**

When we have emptied the key bin and there is one set left - we'll know to look out for you. (If someone else gave you a lift, ask them to check that you are back safely and tell the hare if you are overdue).

3. **If you arrive late...**

If you are normally a runner, not a walker, and you find yourself starting a few minutes late, no worries, join the trail and run your heart out! If you know you are a little slower, and you usually don't overtake much, then please find the home trail and follow it in. You will get a run/walk with the added advantage of meeting all those sweaty hashers with pained expressions looming towards you. When you've had enough, turn around and enjoy the scenery from a different angle as you race toward the beer! Remember, if you are not a fast runner, 10 minutes lateness at the start can make all the difference when trying to catch the pack.

4. **If you break a check...**

...or if you arrive after it has been broken. Make sure that the new trail is clearly marked before you proceed. Hashers arriving later rely on clear trails much more because they are spaced out and don't have the advantage of following closely behind a string of hashers.

5. **Take a torch**

We hash in the afternoon. It gets dark around 7 to 7.30pm. If you are late or lost, you will be trying to find the trail in the dark. Your mobile phone torch is NOT SUFFICIENT to help you find your way

over a long period (it is for reading the check in Backyard). Use your torch as a signal device when necessary (see 7 below).

6. **Take your mobile phone.**

LEARN how to use its navigation features and 'share location'. Keep in in a ziplock bag (you can use the screen through the plastic).

7. **Take a whistle**

The international distress signal for whistles and torches is 6 blasts/ flashes followed by one minutes silence, followed by 6 blasts/flashes, then repeated. Whistles carry further than shouting. Whistles aren't heavy, but they can save your life.

8. **If you lose the paper...**

STOP AND THINK. Your priority is to find it again. Try calling "Are you?" and listen carefully for a response. (if you are following paper and you hear "Are You?" then reply with "On-On"). Return to the last point that you saw paper. Try to find the continuing paper in the direction you were travelling. If you cannot, return to the last paper again and try another direction. If you cannot find the on-trail, walk back along the paper trail - you may have missed a check and be on a false or an on-trail from a check that was laid in error and not cleared. If you find a check, search again for the on-trail, if you cannot find it stay at the check until other hashers or a search party arrives or follow the trail back to the start.

9. **If you are unable to continue forward on the trail...**

If you can, follow the trail back the way you came, it may be a long haul but it is the safest way out. Use your phone to contact the run-site or any other hasher you know to let them know your situation and if possible, location. Share your location with your mobile phone if possible. If you are on paper, DO NOT leave the paper trail to find a better location for a phone signal. Stay on paper.

10. **If you are lost away from paper**

STOP AND THINK. Try to remember where you left the paper and if possible, return to that point. If you are SURE that you are either inside or outside of the circular loop of the hash trail, find a track or path and walk in the direction of the paper trail and look for paper. If you do not find paper within 500m - 1km, STOP. If you are NOT SURE if you are inside or outside of the trail circle, try to find a nearby path or track and STOP. Use your mobile phone, make a call and use the navigation features of your mobile phone or GPS. If you are unable to make contact with anyone, or if you are injured and unable to move, use your whistle or torch to try to attract the attention of searchers or other hashers.

If you are overdue, searchers will come looking around 9.30pm, and will always first follow the paper trail from the start and the finish and continue along the hash trail until the two search teams meet each other. They will pay particular attention to searching areas around the checks. If you are on paper, they will find you easily.

If you cannot be found at first, other hashers will join the search and other trails and areas will be searched until you are found.

Also consider buying a GPS watch or handheld unit. They are lightweight and easy to use.

Now, go and enjoy your hashing.

On-On