

FIRST ON THE SCENE

How you can help in an emergency out on the hills.

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### **Someone in distress? What you can do**

Stay calm. Think logically. Prioritise. Prevent further complications to;

\* You. Stay safe so you do not become a further problem. Put layers on to keep warm, consider risks from animals/falling rocks/environment. Look to your own safety if visibility is fading.

\* Bystanders. Might be useful witnesses, they may need reassurance and be able to help. They are safe, Keep them that way.

\* The Casualty. You can only help them if you stay safe.

### **Emergency Services**

If all you can do is alert them you have done well. But quick actions might save a life.

\* assess the casualty eg a fall? collapse? injuries? how are they lying?

\* decide how to treat any life threatening condition eg control any catastrophic bleeding and manage their airway

\* summon help and keep the casualty warm while waiting.

### **Calling for Emergency Services**

If in doubt, get help. Rescue teams prefer an early call out to a minor injury than a later one that has become serious in fading light. If you have helpers then use them.

Think what the team will need to know. Making written notes is useful.

Dial 112 (or 999). Ask for the Police, then Mountain Rescue and say:

\* where you are with a full grid reference (the operator may not be local)

\* how many casualties you have and the problems eg injuries, hypothermia

\* anything that can help identify your position e.g. easily visible kit or shelter

\* telephone numbers of any other phones at the scene (in case yours fails).

Keep your phone switched on and stay by it.

If you cannot make contact by phone and are alone with the casualty, use a whistle to give the emergency signal- 6 blasts repeated every minute until help arrives. Ignore any 3-blast replies.

In a race, report the situation with race numbers of the casualty and yourself to a marshal, maybe using another runner. Write it down if you can and include any phone numbers.

A text may get through when a mobile call will not and it will keep trying. There is a free emergency 999 text service (<http://www.emergencysms.org.uk/>).

### **Leaving the Injured Person**

This is hard to do but if the casualty needs specialist care, only you can help. If you leave the casualty site make it easily visible to help the rescue team. If the casualty is unconscious, place them in the recovery position, or on their side, to protect their windpipe and breathing and prevent them from choking if they vomit. Do not worry that moving a casualty might paralyse them because if they cannot breathe they will die. Preservation of life comes first, injuries come second.

### **Mountain Rescue Teams**

Your “hand over” can be vital in passing on important information:

- \* age and name of casualty
- \* time of accident
- \* what happened
- \* injuries
- \* signs and symptoms, eg what the casualty complains of and what you have noticed.

### **Casualty Card**

Often found in First Aid Kits they are a checklist for looking after the casualty and passing on vital information to emergency services.

### **Helicopters**

May arrive before the rescue team. They are noisy and create a down draft so secure and anchor loose kit. Reassure the casualty and protect from flying debris. Protect your eyes, put glasses on if you have them.

Attract attention by standing and making a “Y” shape with extended arms to show “Help”. Do not wave which means “Hello”.

Night crews use infrared cameras so DO NOT shine torches directly at the helicopter. If no torch, a lit screen from a mobile phone waved around provides a big target. DO NOT approach a landing helicopter without a signal and DO NOT grab anyone being winched down.

### **General First Aid**

After the accident 5 things can be done:

- \* keep yourself and bystanders safe
- \* summon help
- \* preserve life.

\* limit the worsening of the condition.

\* promote recovery.

## **Primary Survey**

### **DRABCDE**

#### **DANGER**

Firstly to you, then to other bystanders followed by the casualty. Dangers such as loose rocks, cold, animals.

#### **RESPONSE**

Check for a response: talk calmly to the casualty, tell them your name, get theirs, get them to stay still to avoid further injury or risk falling.

Is there massive bleeding? Arterial bleeds need an immediate pressure bandage. Raise the source if possible. If the bleeding is on an extremity and is life threatening, apply a tourniquet above the wound.

#### **AIRWAY**

If the casualty can talk then they can breathe. If the casualty is unconscious, not breathing or breathing noisily, check and clear airway, and check the mouth and remove any obstructions. Open the airway by gently tilting the head back, chin in line with breast bone and open the mouth. Get someone to hold the head still to protect the spine but ensure the airway is always clear.

#### **BREATHING**

If the casualty is conscious then sitting them up may help.

#### **CIRCULATION**

Check pulse at neck/ wrist or by “capillary refill” by pressing a thumb into flesh away from the injury for a few seconds when the white area should revert to pink 3-5 seconds after removal. NB severe cold can affect this test.

If there is no pulse then the likelihood of resuscitation on is very low without an AED (Defibrillator). Sending for help is priority; In a witnessed arrest you can commence CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on an unresponsive casualty but not to the point where you become exhausted. On a cold unresponsive casualty CPR is unlikely to have a successful outcome, if you do start you need to be able to maintain it until help arrives. NB a severely hypothermic person can appear to be dead. Do not Start CPR if Severe Hypothermia is suspected.

#### **DISABILITY**

Is the casualty alert? If you suspect injury to head or spine/pelvis, avoid movement apart from ensuring a clear airway.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Hypothermia causes most deaths in the hills and it is vital that an injured person is protected from the elements. Use a shelter/bivvi bag, insulate from the ground, use warm clothing to protect the casualty and yourself from the elements. Cover extremities, head, neck, hands and feet. Use dry clothes where appropriate. Keep reassuring the casualty even if unconscious because they may still be able to hear.

## **SUMMARY**

- \* look after yourself and bystanders.
- \* look at the scene and then the casualty.
- \* treat life-threatening bleeding and maintain a clear airway.
- \* get help.
- \* keep everybody warm.

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