

# BRITISH PTERIDOLOGICAL SOCIETY SAFETY CODE

In common with other scientific and natural history societies, the BPS has drawn up a safety code for its meetings, in particular field meetings. Every participant should read the code and take the appropriate responsible action for each meeting he or she attends. It is a condition of attendance that you, and not BPS, will be responsible at all times for your own safety and conduct, and that you will not jeopardise the safety of other participants.

## PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

It is the duty of all participants to practise extreme care and common sense and not to take risks. The following points are particularly important in taking ultimate responsibility for your own safety:

1. Ensure that you are adequately clothed and equipped.
2. The meeting leader will have carried out a risk assessment. Pay attention and make sure you understand the risks when these are explained.
3. Never leave the main party without notifying the leader of your plans.
4. Pay particular attention to the hazards of the terrain and their potential danger, as a result of your actions, to others. For example be careful not to dislodge loose stones and boulders.
5. Do not rock-climb without experience and the proper equipment.
6. Do not damage walls, fences, hedges, gates, etc.
7. Leave gates open/shut as the party finds them.
8. Take care not to start a fire.
9. Familiarise yourself with the procedure to adopt in the event of an accident in the field (see below).
10. Follow the advice and instructions of the leader.

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Always carry suitable outer clothing for example windproof and waterproof outer clothing depending on the conditions; and wear suitable footwear, e.g. walking boots or, in certain circumstances, wellingtons. All clothing should be suitable for the job (e.g. jeans are not recommended for some outdoor activities especially in cold/wet conditions) and for the worst potential weather. Carry sufficient food and drink for the excursion, with some extra in case of emergency. The meeting leader may have a first aid kit but carrying one of your own is advisable.

In **mountains**, the following are necessary:

1. Suitable warm clothing preferably of layers that can be removed or added to as necessary. Modern thermal materials are recommended. Depending on conditions gloves and suitable head gear may also be appropriate. Exposure to sun may be a factor in choice of headgear in particular.
2. Properly fitting walking or climbing boots; footwear should ideally be waterproof. Wellingtons may be appropriate in some circumstances but generally only for short distances. However some modern wellingtons are designed for walking and may be appropriate.
3. A rucksack with spare sweater/ top layer and (if not being worn) waterproof outer layer and over-trousers.
4. A whistle, compass, maps, torch, first-aid kit. A GPS unit with spare batteries is a useful addition.
5. An emergency survival bag if more than 1/2-hour from the nearest inhabited place.

Gaiters and trekking poles may be useful additions depending on terrain and conditions; these are a matter of personal preference. At all outdoor meetings, it is worth considering carrying an emergency survival blanket. They can be obtained for a few pounds from retail outlets selling outdoor leisure clothing and equipment or on line. They are very light (c.85 g) and occupy very little space.

## PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT IN THE FIELD

First-aid must be rendered at once, and medical and relief help should be sought if necessary. Prevention of exposure is almost always possible through adequate clothing, equipment and procedure, but if a case of exposure is suspected the initial treatment is additional warm clothing and a windproof or waterproof outer garment, plus ingestion of a source of rapidly absorbed food, such as sugar or glucose in solid or liquid form, preferably hot liquid.

## THE INTERNATIONAL DISTRESS CODE IN MOUNTAINS

Six long flashes/blasts/shouts/waves in succession, repeated at 1-minute intervals.

The following publication may also prove helpful: Garside, John (published 2010) *Safety on Mountains*. Published by the British Mountaineering Council and available from them or through booksellers and on line.