

## WTMC ALPINE TRIPS

### Overall expectations for WTMC alpine trips

- 1.1 Club alpine trips should only run if risks for that trip have been appropriately identified and can be managed to a satisfactory level. Decisions to run alpine trips are made on a case by case basis, depending on the leader, participants, and conditions.
- 1.2 The main aim on all club alpine trips is to get home safe. This means appropriately identifying, monitoring and managing risks. It may result in changing objectives, turning around, or cancelling the trip if necessary.
- 1.3 Club trips are a group activity. Participants are expected to make decisions collaboratively and look after each other. Participants should not separate from the group or turn back on their own.
- 1.4 Club alpine trips should consider the requirements and recommendations from the Department of Conservation and any other relevant bodies such as landowners and iwi. This includes (but is not limited to):
  - Any alerts on the DOC website or advice provided by DOC offices;
  - DOC's volcanic risk management guidelines in Ruapehu (see [map](#));
  - Using [Avalanche forecasts](#) to assess avalanche risks; and
  - Tikanga Māori with respect to summits, especially with regards to certain maunga of special importance such as (but not limited to) Taranaki or Ngāuruhoe.
- 1.5 All participants must have:
  - been on at least one Medium or Medium-Fit WTMC tramping trip before coming on a WTMC alpine trip;
  - completed the WTMC snowcraft course (or equivalent training); and
  - a solid Medium to Medium-Fit level of fitness.
- 1.6 Where a trip is oversubscribed, priority will be given to WTMC and NZAC club members.
- 1.7 One or more Alpine Coordinators may be nominated by the Committee to oversee alpine trips and the requirements set out in this section. In particular, Alpine Coordinator(s) should be nominated if the Chief Guide does not have sufficient mountaineering experience.
- 1.8 A [risk assessment template](#) must be completed by the Trip Leader prior to the trip, for approval by the Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator(s). The approved risk assessment will be provided to all trip participants as a starting point for them to analyse risks while on the trip.

### *Ratio and Co-leaders*

- 1.9 There should be a ratio of one alpine Trip Leader for every three participants. A higher ratio may be required depending on the objective or the level of experience of other participants.
- 1.10 If there are more than three participants, the Trip Leader should either restrict numbers or nominate a Co-Leader (which can be one of the participants, as long as they have the relevant experience). The Chief Guide/Alpine coordinator can help identify a Co-Leader if needed.

1.11 The main role of the Co-Leader is to help support the rest of the group on the day, e.g. make sure everyone is comfortable and using correct techniques etc. The Co-leader should have the technical skills and confidence to travel in various terrain while also supporting others to do so. Like all trip participants, Co-Leaders are encouraged to also participate in trip planning and decision making.

*Mandatory individual gear on alpine trips*

1.12 Every club alpine trip participant must carry individual gear as specified by the Trip Leader. This will generally include a helmet, ice axe(s), and crampons.

*Mandatory group gear on alpine trips*

1.13 Every club alpine trip must carry the following group gear:

- Bothy bags or alpine tents<sup>1</sup>, depending on the objective (not standard club flies);
- A club PLB (+ an additional PLB to be taken if the group is 5 people or more); and
- A club first aid kit.

1.14 Where the route, terrain or avalanche risk warrant it, all participants should carry avalanche gear, and have the skills to use it. Avalanche gear can be hired from outdoor shops or other local clubs, including NZAC (for NZAC members).

**Responsibilities of all trip participants (including Trip Leaders)**

1.15 Everyone on the trip is responsible for their own and others' safety.

1.16 All participants are responsible for:

- **being honest and transparent** about their skills, mental and physical condition (e.g. fitness, health, and injury, fatigue/stress...) and comfort with elements such as exposure, technical terrain etc - both prior to and during the trip, and to keep the Trip Leader updated with any changes;
- **fostering a safe and supportive environment**, so everyone feels comfortable speaking up if they have a concern;
- **actively monitoring risks** (e.g. changing conditions, group, terrain, route..)
- **follow the reasonable instructions of the Trip Leader** and any Co-Leader at all times; and
- **pairing up and using the buddy system** on club trips e.g. co-check crampons, energy level, cold, anxiety, etc.

1.17 All participants are also encouraged to:

- **take a proactive approach to planning**, e.g. review the route, risks, weather and avalanche forecasts etc; and
- **with approval from the Trip Leader, set aside some time on the trip to practice** skills like self arrest or companion rescue if the conditions permit, to keep essential skills fresh in their mind.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two 4-people bothy bags available from the gear room. Alpine tents are not available from the gear room.

## Becoming an Alpine Trip Leader

1.18 To become an Alpine Trip Leader, at a minimum, the candidate should meet the following requirements:

Training	at least WTMC snowcraft course or equivalent;
Experience	at least three alpine trips (preferably five)
Fitness	at least solid Medium (preferably Medium-Fit)
Leadership	demonstrated ability to manage and lead a group, <i>e.g. experience leading WTMC tramping trips and/or having taken a WTMC leadership training course</i>

1.19 The candidate should also:

- be a WTMC member;
- provide one or more ‘referees’ to confirm the above information; and
- have read and agreed to comply with this policy.

1.20 It is also recommended that Trip Leaders complete an alpine leadership course.

1.21 The application is assessed by the Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator who makes a decision on whether the club member is fit to lead alpine trips, and if so what kind of alpine trips. If the candidate is not deemed ready to lead alpine trips, alternative options may be discussed (e.g. propose that they support a more experienced Trip Leader).

1.22 New Alpine Trip Leaders must co-lead at least one alpine trip with a more experienced Trip Leader before they can lead on their own. The Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator may extend this requirement for a number of trips if deemed necessary.

## Responsibilities of Alpine Trip Leaders

### *Before the trip*

1.23 The Alpine Trip Leader is responsible for:

- a. **completing the [risk assessment template](#)** for each trip and submitting it to the Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator for approval. This should occur before the trip is listed on the trip schedule.
- b. **sharing the risk assessment and communicating clear expectations** to participants for what to expect on the trip, before they confirm they are coming. This can include:
  - the proposed route and possible alternatives;
  - the expected duration and technical difficulty;
  - the skills and experience required for the trip (e.g. confidence down climbing on steep sections, rope skills etc); and
  - encouraging participants to ask questions if there is anything they are unsure about.

c. **screening participants** to ensure they have the relevant skills and experience. For each participant, the Trip Leader should at least ascertain:

- completion of a WTMC snowcraft course or equivalent;
- previous alpine experience that is suitable for that trip; and
- appropriate level of fitness for that trip

*Note: Where appropriate, the trip leader may contact other trip leaders or club members to undertake “reference checks” and confirm the information provided by a participant.*

d. **ensuring that there is the right mix of experience amongst the group, including:**

- suitable levels of avalanche training amongst the group (for example, by using the [ATES](#) classification);
- identifying ‘experienced’ participants who can help others, vs ‘beginner’ participants who could likely require assistance; and
- if applicable, nominate a Co-leader and ensure there is an appropriate ratio of experienced vs beginner.

e. **reviewing the risk assessment template** in the days leading up to the trip, and update it if necessary to ensure all information is still accurate.

1.24 The Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator can assist the Trip Leader with the points above where needed.

1.25 Planning that relates to the logistics for the trip (e.g. transport, trip fee payment, food etc) may be delegated to other trip participants.

#### *The day of the trip*

1.26 In addition to broader responsibilities that apply to all participants, the Trip Leader is responsible for:

- **checking in with participants as the trip progresses**, to monitor their mental/physical condition and ensure they are feeling comfortable or adjust the trip plan if necessary.
- **fostering a safe and collaborative environment**, including:
  - ensuring all participants have a buddy and understand what it involves;
  - seeking input from the group before making decisions;
  - making decisions collaboratively, to the extent possible; and
  - ensuring that no one is left behind. The trip should run as a group activity. Participants should not wander off or turn back by themselves.
- **mitigating and avoiding risks**, including through actively monitoring risks and making decisions accordingly as the trip progresses, including:
  - environmental factors (e.g. terrain, weather, avalanche, changing conditions, and other objective risks); and
  - human factors (e.g. fatigue, cold, skillset, ego, summit fever, group think and other subjective risks ie. terrain, route).

1.27 The Trip Leader is also responsible for giving a safety briefing to the group before the group starts walking. This can occur the night before or in the morning.

1.28 A safety briefing should include:

<b>SAFETY BRIEFING</b>	
<b>TRIP &amp; POTENTIAL RISKS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The main aim of the trip is to get home safe: emphasise that the goal is not to get to the top and the group may need to turn around if risks cannot be managed</li> <li>● Intended destination and route(s)</li> <li>● Objective hazards (environment factors): e.g. terrain, weather, avalanche</li> <li>● Subjective hazards (human factors): e.g. many beginners on the trip, fatigue/cold, following the leader or the group without thinking, commitment to the summit rather than turning around if unsafe...</li> </ul>
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Turn around time</li> <li>● Decision points: where on the route you plan to stop and reassess</li> <li>● Assigning buddies: emphasising the need look after each other</li> <li>● Expectation to work as a group: everyone is responsible for the group safety and is encouraged to give their opinion, speak up if they are not comfortable, look after each other</li> <li>● Safety gear and who carries it (shelter, first aid kit, avalanche gear if carried)</li> <li>● Communication gear and who carries it (club and personal PLBs, in-reach etc)</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER INFORMATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Any environmental things to cover – poo pots/rubbish etc.</li> <li>● Any cultural considerations</li> <li>● Any other relevant information</li> <li>● Any questions/concerns: encourage participants to ask any questions or raise any concerns</li> </ul>

1.29 The trip leader may decide to split the group in two groups if it is safe to do so (for example, if a trip participant is unable or unwilling to continue). A group may only be split if:

- any potential risk can be appropriately managed by each subgroup;
- the trip leader and participants agree to split the group - if no agreement is reached the entire group should turn back; and
- all other aspects of this policy are complied with (including there is a club approved trip leader or Co-leader for each sub-group and an appropriate ratio of Trip Leader / Co-leader to participants).

*After the trip*

1.30 Trip Leaders are strongly encouraged to do a debrief with the group at the end of the day or soon after the trip. For example this may include what went well, what could have gone better, any skills to learn or how to avoid mistakes. Key learnings can also be included in the trip report for publication on the website.

1.31 Trip Leaders are required to report any incidents, near misses, questions or concerns to the Chief Guide or the Alpine Coordinator, and any damaged gear to the Gear Custodian.

*Support provided to Alpine Trip Leaders*

1.32 WTMC will support Trip Leaders if they choose to:

- amend the trip plan or turn around to adapt to the conditions/group and better manage risks;
- cancel a trip (e.g. for adverse conditions or for any other reason); and
- turn away a participant (e.g. if they are not comfortable with them coming on the trip).

1.33 WTMC, including through the Chief Guide/Alpine Coordinator, is available to support Alpine Trip Leaders. For example, this could include:

- accessing WTMC leadership training or a scholarship to take an external course;
- discussing options to lead or co-lead trips that match their experience;
- helping connecting a new leader with an experienced Trip Leader e.g. for ‘mentorship’;
- helping to review participants’ experience before they go on an alpine trip; and
- providing guidance on how to complete the risk assessment template.