

Safety guidelines

Illawong Lodge



ILLAWONG LODGE incorporating Pounds Creek Hut (1925), built and run by the Club since 1956.

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Listed on the Register of the National Estate.

Safety guidelines

Illawong Lodge

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR ILLAWONG LODGE

An Introduction from the Illawong Committee

Skiing and walking in alpine areas are inherently risky activities. These inherent risks are further increased by the **remoteness** of the area, **fast changing weather conditions** and, in winter, by **shorter days**.

In recent years a number of incidents relating to safety have occurred in and around Illawong to both members and members of the public. As a response, and after many months of work, the Safety Committee has put together this draft set of safety guidelines for you to comment on.

They are intended as a 'work in progress' and focus primarily on the risks associated with skiing, though the same principles can be applied to walking.

The Illawong Committee strongly encourages you and your group to read these guidelines. To provide constructive feedback to the safety committee, please take the time to fill out the brief survey in the back of this folder. If you have any further comments please don't hesitate to email illawong@illawong.asn.au.

Illawong Ski Tourers encourages the promotion of safety amongst its members, their guests and members of the public. This document is intended as a guide designed to promote safety in and around Illawong Lodge. It is not intended to replace or substitute recognised and established safety information.

All people staying at Illawong Lodge are reminded of Illawong Ski Tourers' policy of providing assistance to anyone in trouble or distress in the alpine area, recognising the skills and experience of the people involved and being conscious of the importance of not increasing the number of people at risk or in danger.

In the case of an Illawong member or visitor being involved in an actual or potential safety incident – whether receiving or providing assistance – the Illawong Committee requires that a Safety Incident Reporting form be completed and returned to the Committee – see the Lodge Operation Manual for instructions.

As this document cannot cover every foreseeable incident, IST encourages members and their guests to undergo an approved first aid training course with a view to continually update and further their knowledge in alpine safety.

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SKI SAFETY - AN OVERVIEW

Before Leaving Home

Thinking about the safety of your group should begin as early as when you are planning your trip at home. Things to consider are:

- Are all members of the group aware of clothing requirements, including wet weather gear?
- Will the group have adequate equipment – maps, compasses, first aid, snow shovels?
- Whether all gear is in satisfactory condition for the conditions
- Repair, replace or consider hiring if in any doubt
- Do you need to book hire gear?

Leaving Jindabyne

Prior to leaving Jindabyne it is a good idea to consider:

- Check the weather forecast (on display at Nuggets & Paddys or ring 0055 32009)?
- How much daylight will be left when you reach Guthega?
- Do you have slow or new skiers in your group?
- More experienced people should help the novices with ski hire – allow adequate time for this.
- If you may not reach the lodge by dark, or if weather conditions are bad, consider staying in Jindabyne & making the trip the next morning.

Remember it can take over 3 hours from Guthega for beginners in good conditions.

Before you set out from Illawong each day

- Start with a high-energy breakfast & drink plenty of fluid.
- Check the weather forecast/barograph & current conditions. [See card on barograph]
- Check your daypack contents. [See card on daypack contents]
- Plan your outing & consider destinations and route(s) [see card on planning your outing]
- Group preparation & plans. [See card]
- Are you skiing together or splitting into groups? [See card]
- Is anyone staying at the lodge?
- Check your skiing equipment.
- Check your navigation and emergency equipment
- Do some warm-up stretches.

While you are out there

- Keep an eye on all members of the party and stay within **visual contact**– as a general rule keep within easy visual contact, & check that no-one is having difficulty.
- Look for signs of fatigue or hypothermia. [See card 6 on hypothermia]
- Stop frequently to re-fuel – food and water! As a rule if someone is hungry and thirsty the group probably should have had a refuelling stop earlier.
- If the weather or visibility turns bad – stay together, seek a sheltered spot, stay where you are, discuss strategy with everyone & make sure the plans suit the slowest/weakest member. If your party decides to split & go different ways – make sure everyone knows the other groups plans & keep a minimum of 2 people in any group. Keep an eye on main range for incoming weather & always consider the turnaround time & how long it will take you to return to the Lodge under the new weather & snow conditions.
- Check your position and direction regularly to prevent getting lost. If you are just confused as to direction, watch for short breaks in the weather and stay put while you try to sort it out. [See card on emergencies for more details]

In case of emergency

- If you have an injured or distressed skier -
 - Keep the accident victim comfortable, warm & dry.
 - Plan carefully – how best to get help, how to raise the alarm, can you return to the lodge? [See card on emergencies]

PLANNING YOUR OUTING

All lodge occupants should be involved in a discussion of:

- Weather & visibility
- Snow conditions – icy/mushy/potential for avalanche etc
- Skill levels of all skiing that day
- Fitness levels of all involved
- Competency with compass & maps
- Equipment suitability
- Departure time
- Planned destination and route
- Length of trip - < 1 hour

> 1-3 hours

> 3 hours

- Turnaround time and estimated time of arrival back at Illawong
- Contingency plan for easier return if there are changes in the weather conditions, skier fatigue or injury.

Discuss whether the group intends to stay together or to split up, this will have implications for day pack contents & distribution of food water & safety equipment amongst the group members.

Ensure you are carrying more than sufficient food & water

WEATHER

Interpreting the Barograph readings

The barograph in the sitting room measures atmospheric pressure and is of value in predicting the weather & changes in weather. Generally speaking, low readings [called 'lows'] indicate "less favourable" weather (windy weather or precipitation) whilst 'highs' indicate "good" weather (clear skies, light-moderate winds).

Absolute values are not as important as perhaps the changes in values. The faster the change, the quicker the weather is likely to alter. A change of say 10 millibars in 6 hours could be considered fast. Large changes, particularly falls in readings, are indicative of big changes in weather. A change of say 20 millibars could be considered big. A steady variation of up to 5 millibars in 24 hours could be considered a fairly stable reading.

See page 18 of the Lodge Operations Manual for more instruction in reading & starting the barograph.

It is important to watch and respond to weather conditions throughout the day

Other signs of changing weather conditions are:

- Cirrus clouds [high wispy clouds]
- It may become unusually warmer before a change
- Darkening clouds in the south-west, west and north west usually show the onset of a change for the worse.
- These changing weather conditions can quickly have a marked effect on the condition of the snow, with the creation of slush, or icy conditions, which will impact on the time & energy it takes to return to the lodge.

All trips should be planned within the capabilities of the weakest skier.

DAYPACK CONTENTS

Daypacks should have enough contents to enable you to survive out for a night as well as coping with changes of weather, and hunger and thirst needs.

Not everyone in the group needs to carry every item, but if the group splits up, some thought should go into which party has what in their emergency gear.

It is recommended that every person carry these items as a minimum:

- Water bottle – at the very least 1.5 litres
- Lunch
- Extra food
- High energy nibbles / chocolate / nuts /dried fruit etc
- Sunscreen and lip cream
- Clothing –
 - Extra warm clothes such as fibre pile
 - Jacket if not wearing it - such as Goretex
 - Over pants – if not wearing them
 - Spare dry socks
 - Spare gloves/overmitts
 - Long-johns, thermal underwear
 - Warm hat /sun hat – if not wearing it
- Goggles for bad weather [as opposed to sunglasses]
- Map and compass
- Head torch
- Small first aid kit
- Space blanket
- Whistle

It is recommended that the group carry these items between them:

- Stove, fuel and matches, and cups.
- Shovel
- First aid kit
- Bivvy bag

- GPS, mobile phone
- Sleeping bag
- Space blanket
- Ski repair kit
- Consider carrying an EPERB (Electronic Positioning Emergency Radio Beacon) and be aware of conditions of use.

NAVIGATION

- Carry a map or a compass +/- a GPS
- Know how to use these aids. Reference book “Map reading Handbook” Edition 3 is on the shelves in Illawong.
- Regularly check your location with map and compass.
- Involve the whole group in the process of navigation – this can be part of the enjoyment of the trip – and assists if the group splits up.
- Use recognisable features to guide you and point them out to the group. This is called ‘hand railing’ and may assist you in your return to Illawong.
- Respond quickly to any deterioration in visibility by being aware of your exact location as the weather changes, & altering your return route as safety dictates.
- If you are carrying a GPS, log “waypoints” to assist in returning in bad weather.

SIGNS OF DIFFICULTY

It is important to monitor the wellbeing of all the members of your party.

There are many signs that a skier may be experiencing difficulty, they include:

- Inability to keep up with the group
- Increase in the number of falls and difficulty in rising from a fall
- Mood changes or distress
- Skin colour becoming pale or bluish
- Signs of hypothermia (see Card #6 Hypothermia)

The most common reasons for these difficulties are related to fatigue, inadequate intake of food and water and hypothermia. The skier may also be frightened if they feel the terrain or snow conditions are beyond their ability, a skier may be embarrassed to admit that they are scared or do not feel in control.

It is essential to recognise these signs of difficulty immediately so measures can be taken to reverse them or prevent them from worsening. It may be necessary to:

- Find a sheltered spot and assess the skier
- Stop and adjust layers of clothing
- Stop for food and drinks
- Adjust the pace of the group
- Reassess the goals for the day
- Change the turnaround time and the route home

It is imperative to ski within the abilities of the slowest skier.

HYPOTHERMIA

Avoidance is the key to a safe & enjoyable outing. All Skiers should be aware of the signs & dangers of Hypothermia

The degree of over-exposure to the cold depends on:

- Clothing
- Temperature
- Wind speed
- Period of exposure - all contributing to wind chill factor

Other things may exacerbate the conditions:

- Low atmospheric pressure
- Wind, snow, rain
- Fatigue
- Anxiety & hunger.

Signs & Symptoms

When body temperature falls, early warning signs may include:

- Feeling cold
- Shivering
- Clumsiness, stumbling or uncoordinated movements
- Slurred speech
- Apathy & irrational behaviour
- Confusion
- Slowness of physical or mental responses
- Excessive fatigue
- Visual disturbances
- Faintness
- Cramps
- Slow pulse

Principles of First Aid

- Remove casualty to a warm, dry place
- Protect casualty & yourself from wind, rain, sleet, cold & wet ground

- Avoid excess activity or movement
- Remove wet clothing
- Warm casualty, place between blankets or sleeping bag & wrap in space-blanket or similar.
- It may be necessary for a companion to strip to underclothing & share the sleeping bag/blankets to help warm the casualty.
- Cover the head to maintain body heat
- Give warm drinks if conscious, do NOT give alcohol
- In case of frostbite, do not rub or massage the frostbitten area, and never apply snow or cold water.

When possible, these principles are best carried-out after returning the casualty to the lodge. In some instances, it may be necessary to commence or apply all these steps in the field.

EMERGENCIES

Avoidance

Be conservative; plan to avoid emergencies and staying out overnight

Monitor throughout the day:

- The weather
- Snow conditions
 - Will it be icy on the way home and will you need to adjust the route?
- People
 - Watch how they are coping with the overall speed, snow conditions especially on the return home. Climbing is easier when fresh and most energy is spent on the outward journey.
- Fatigue level
 - Plan the time of lunch to restore people's energy?
 - Have regular snack times & breaks
 - When stopping consider the conditions & your time schedule
 - Practice taking bearings
 - Be early taking bearings while you can still see surroundings so you pre-empt navigational difficulties.

If unsure of current location:

- Get your compass out.
- Relax, observe, orientate yourself
- If you have **not** crossed the Snowy River – Illawong will be to the West.
- If you **have** crossed the Snowy River - Illawong will be to the East and down.
- Look for breaks in the weather to watch for landmarks.

Really Lost?? Stay put – wait for assistance to come to you.

If you have **no idea** where you are – stay calm and support each other.

Ring 000 if your mobile works, this will connect you to emergency services. If directed or if your mobile will not work set off the EPERB.

Find a sheltered spot, do not attempt to walk out, mark your position with crossed skis & /or coloured clothing tied to bushes, stamp a cross in the snow, dig a snow cave, or at a minimum, dig a trench big enough for all to huddle in, cover with poles or branches, stay dry, huddle together for warmth.

In case of Injury

Assess the person's injuries & potential for spinal injury.

If there is a chance of a spinal injury, do not move the person & make them as warm & comfortable as possible.

If the condition will be significantly aggravated by skiing or weight bearing, do not attempt to return to the lodge. Where possible consult with paramedics by mobile phone.

Priority should be given to saving the life over further aggravating an injury; therefore, if ongoing exposure is resulting in hypothermia, then moving the person into a sheltered location should be considered.

If the injured skier is unable to return to the lodge, they should be left with the most qualified first aider while 2 or more skiers return to the lodge for additional equipment such as sleeping bags, tent, clothing, food, rescue sled. It may be necessary to ski to Guthega or Charlottes Pass to raise the alarm if other communications have failed.

Party members should be absolutely certain of the position of the injured & of their ability to regain the lodge in the prevailing conditions.

If possible assist the injured party to return to the lodge. Depending on injuries it may be possible for the patient to ski out after first aid, or a medical evacuation may need to be organised via phone 000.

Skier fails to return to the lodge

- Consider the ability of the skier involved, if they are alone & their plan for the day.
- Discuss the deadline by which you would expect them to return.
- Do not place anyone else in danger by starting a rescue.
- Leave the light on in the lounge with curtains open, the door unlocked, the kettle full. Go to bed & sleep well as you may need the rest.

People seeking help at Illawong

- Always offer support and assistance to those in need.
- Unless they are in close proximity [e.g. this side of the Snowy River], it may not be possible to mount a rescue without outside assistance.
- Contact the authorities via a mobile phone [ring 000], EPERB, or it may be necessary to ski to Guthega or Charlotte Pass to raise the alarm.
- Consider the time of day, snow and weather conditions including visibility, and the competence of those involved.

Do not put yourself in danger to attempt to rescue someone

Extra accommodation is always available in the Emergency Shelter under the lodge and within the lodge in cases of emergencies.

USE OF SLED

The sled is stored under the lounge room seat on the western wall. The halves of the sled can be carried as back packs to the casualty & constructed at the accident site.

The 2 halves have matching pegs & sockets that fit together & the clip is secured over the join.

The clip secures the sled into one piece.

The handles are secured to one end of the sled.

The cross bar is placed between the handles of the sled

The Cross bar is secured between the handles of the sled

The sled is now complete with handles attached

It may be more comfortable for the casualty to have their head positioned toward the handles.

DEBRIEFING AND REPORTING

It is necessary to report all adverse events to a committee member as soon as possible. The Operations Manual outlines the process for reporting such incidents.

Take careful notes of details of the event.

It may also be necessary to formally report to the Jindabyne Police/ Rescue services.

The Illawong Ski Tourers Safety Committee sees these Guidelines as a work in progress and welcome the feedback and suggestions from members. Please email any comments to Trish Evans on illawong@illawong.asn.au.

There is also a brief survey in the rear of this draft for you to fill in so that the safety committee can continually improve safety in and around Illawong.

DRAFT SAFETY GUIDELINES SURVEY

1. How many members of your group read the Guidelines?
2. Did you find the content of the Guidelines useful?
3. Did any aspect of these Guidelines need further explanation/development? Please describe:
4. Is there something missing from the Guidelines which should be there? Please describe:
5. Is there something you consider to be incorrect/inappropriate in the Guidelines? Please describe:
6. Did you do something differently as a result of reading the Guidelines? Please Describe:
7. Did you find the format/layout of the document easy to follow?

8. Do you think it would be useful to have a condensed version on a card that could be put in a pocket/backpack?

9. Any further comments:

Thanks for your input. Please return the survey to illawong@illawong.asn.au