

Pennine Fell Runners Search and Rescue approach.

The purpose of this document is to provide some thinking in advance regarding any situation in which Pennine Fell Runners are faced with the potential need to call on Search & Rescue assistance; thinking in respect of when to make such a call and what preparatory steps the Club members can themselves take in advance of making the call.

Scope and Summary

This approach is written specifically with Pennine Fell Runners organised training and events in mind; it is advisable good practice for the Club on such occasions and has no specific intent for outdoor activities arranged by others.

In summary the Pennine approach to search and rescue is to (1) decide when an event participant is **overdue** - see flowchart over the page - and then (2) to keep everyone else safe by only following the guidance in this document and then (3) making a call for Mountain Rescue assistance through the “999” service asking for **Police** and asking them to arrange **Mountain Rescue** and finally (4) providing the rescue team with sufficient information as they require over the hours that follow.

In the case of an **injured** participant the Club will immediately start with step (2).

Context

A “near dark final runner return” event on a Winter Handicap this past 2023-24 series resulted in an additional risk TR1.10 being added by the Committee to the PFR General risk assessment and a couple of further actions assigned for less formal resolution; this is the output from one of those actions.

It is Pennine Fell Runners good practice for daytime events – especially in Winter – to aim for the whole cohort of participants to finish in good time before darkness falls. In support of potential search and rescue assistance the Club does record some information about participants but mostly leaves them to assess their own pace and timely completion expectations.

Rationale

- (1) We decide when a runner is overdue based on the time the event organiser anticipated the participant cohort would mostly have reached the finish point. This assessment will be adapted if several of the event's participants arrived later than expected, which would indicate everyone is taking longer on this occasion.
- (2) Keeping everyone else safe requires that no Club members or bystanders should head off and carry out local searches themselves. Staying safe and available to provide the Rescue team with information is much more important.
- (3) Timing the call to the Rescue services is critical and we are advised to make it **as soon as** we deem a participant to be overdue for this event on this occasion. Even if there are hours until darkness falls, an injured runner on the fell will be getting colder by the hour. Knowledge of the overdue participant's ability and current health and current equipment can also be taken into account – perhaps motivating an even earlier call.

We make our call through the “999 service to Police” and ask for Mountain Rescue assistance. There are 7 Mountain Rescue Teams (MRTs) in the Peak District and the operational boundaries are not always obvious. A 999 call for assistance (usually to Police) results in a call to the regional Duty Controller, who decides which (if any) team to call. In some circumstances it may not be the ‘home’ team – they might be on another job or out of area. This would then result in one or more teams being called out.

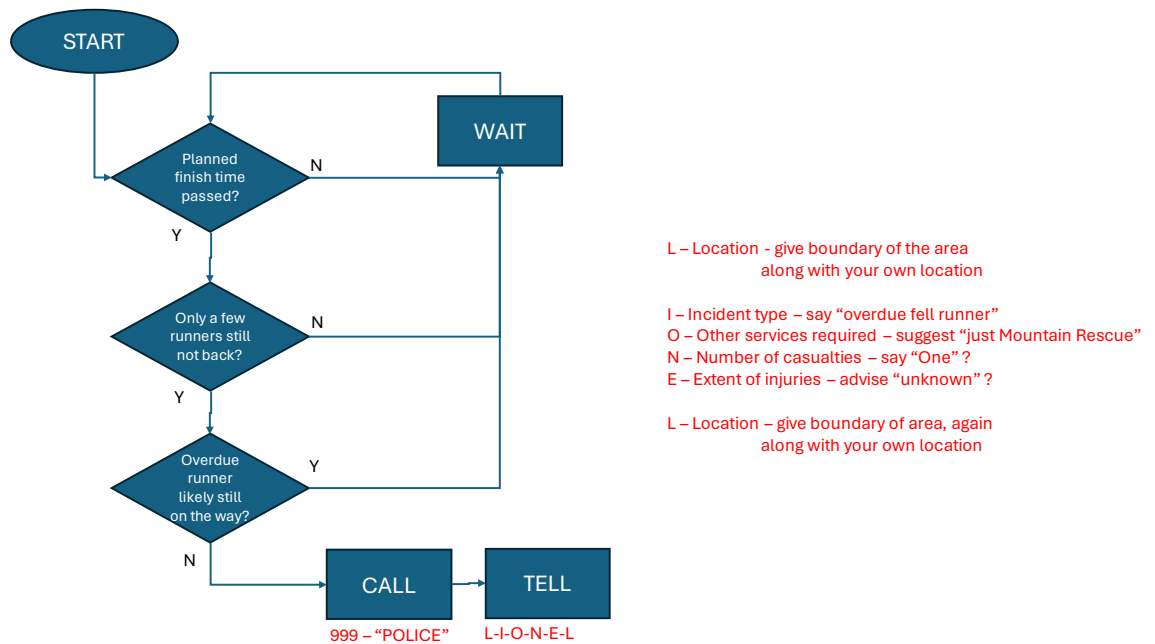
- (4) Information to assist the Rescue team will be provided by the Club as available – this could include as much of the following as has been noted by the Club in records or on-the-day registration logs:
 - a. Intended route with possible or well used variants - like early cutbacks or bonus hill reps.
 - b. Name, rough age, description of clothes; this info allows for asking anyone on the hill.
 - c. any car or bike location, model, registration so that its movements can be used as intelligence
 - d. Participant mobile phone number – to help with location by Rescue app – or home number
 - e. any Known medical conditions or issues, to help with care once found
 - f. a note of anyone who saw the missing participant during the event; when & where. Rescue team might want to talk to them - so **their** contact details helpful too.

Items excluded

In discussion amongst members of the Club with rescue team experience we have decided not to use any “friend of a friend” routes to contact a particular team, given the presence of 7 co-ordinated Mountain Rescue Teams in the peak district any of which could be operating out of area or otherwise stood down. The “call 999” approach best guarantees a timely response for our overdue participant.

Similarly, our colleague Club members with relevant experience advise that there is likely to be minimal benefit in heading out to search ourselves prior to the mobilisation of a rescue team. This is because a further casualty of a searching Club colleague is always possible and the likelihood of an overdue runner not making it to the finish if they are at the lower level safe colleague search area, is not highly probable.

Flowchart



This version approved by PFR Committee in early June 2024