

## FRA Guidelines for Race Organisers, 2015 and 2016

This section is not intended to be prescriptive, but to indicate key activities important for a successful event and to give guidance on how these activities may be accomplished. These guidelines are not necessarily relevant to all events. Further material is available on the FRA website and in the Race Organisers' Pack. These guidelines refer throughout to the 'Race Organiser', which includes members of the event team working on behalf of the organiser.

### 1. Duty of Care

The general principle behind these guidelines is that runners must take responsibility for their own safety on the hills and they will have confirmed this by signing the entry form. The entry form is thus a key document – making sure that runners have filled it in properly and then retaining the signed forms, is important.

However any organiser of an event also has a 'duty of care' towards all involved, including competitors and event officials, auxiliary helpers such as first-aiders and members of the public who may be affected by the event. A duty of care is an obligation to adhere to a standard of reasonable care while taking any action which could foreseeably harm others.

Every race is different and has different requirements and challenges and it is not possible to be prescriptive about the details of all categories of event. The Race Organiser should thus consider all foreseeable areas of potential hazard and put in place reasonable precautions to reduce the risks (other than risks inherent to fell running) to an acceptable level.

Inherent risks in fell running are the risks associated with running in natural, often mountainous, terrain in all weathers, including slips, trips and falls causing injury and hypothermia causing physical and sometimes mental impairment. Either risk is exacerbated by fatigue, dehydration, running out of energy and extended exposure times due to getting lost.

### 2. Pre-Race Planning

#### *FRA Race registration requirements*

Compliance with the "Fell Running – Rules and Requirements for Race Organisers" is a prerequisite for FRA registration, including insurance cover. The FRA Fixtures Secretary should be consulted well in advance of the event to arrange registration.

#### *Event planning*

A concise Race Plan is conventional to ensure that all aspects of the race organisation can be considered and tasks allocated appropriately. It is valuable as a means of communication to officials and helpers on the day and can be used to record any lessons learnt for the benefit of next year's event.

The plan should include relevant environmental issues, for example the maximum number of runners the course can take.

If possible avoid dates when other organised events (walking, running or mountain-biking) will be using the same ground.

Examples of written Race Plans are available on the FRA web-site in the '[Organisers](#)' section. These will obviously include the elements important to the specific event, but can be used as a basis for constructing your own Race Plan. The Race Plan will be central to the later investigation of any incidents arising during the race.

### *Pre-race publicity*

The FRA Handbook and web-site are the main channels of publicity available to all FRA Races. You can also consider flyers for local notice boards, notification of local fell running clubs, the FRA forum and other channels such as Facebook site entries.

### *Course design*

The course is the single most important factor for most runners – a good course makes a good race. Decisions which will need to be addressed include:-

- Length, climb and general terrain
- The number of runners which can be managed
- Whether certain sections should be flagged or designated 'out of bounds', to restrict runners to certain locations (either because of access limitations or to avoid particular terrain).
- Environmental considerations
  - Path protection - The most vulnerable areas are slopes of more than 30%, very wet slopes, bare earth or peat slopes and scree slopes. With increasing altitude, the vulnerability of soils and vegetation increases and the likelihood of re-growth reduces. Most of our erosion is caused by descending runners.
  - Use existing paths - If there is a path in existence use it, following it as closely as possible and adhering to any erosion control instructions. Avoid creating new paths.
  - Pay attention to steep slopes - Avoid steep, bare slopes, very wet slopes and scree runs, particularly if alternative routes exist and especially on descent routes.
  - Resting the route - In areas suffering badly, consider resting the hill for the next few years until the ground has recovered.
  - Consider ground conditions - In very sensitive areas consider alternative areas when thawing snow, heavy frost or excessive rain have softened the ground to a considerable depth.
  - Boundary protection - Limit wall and fence crossing to specific locations e.g. particular stiles or gates and ensure that this is enforced.
- Start Location. Consider varying the start location and if necessary requesting runners not to practice on the course beforehand. If possible, locate starts on areas of road or track, which can bear the pressure of many runners milling around. There should be adequate distance for runners to spread out before reaching any narrow footpaths, gates or stiles.
- Particular features which should be pointed out to runners.
- The location of check-points and marshals either to designate the full course (prevent runners short-cutting) or to monitor the race. Take into account the availability of radio and/or mobile phone connectivity.
- Important check-points or features such as tag-drops may need to be flagged even in the middle of a race, to ensure that runners approach the check point from the right direction.
- Does the race need to be designated either 'ER' (experience required), or 'NS' (navigational skill required)?
- Road sections and road crossings may be unavoidable, but the course design should minimise these. Road sections and crossings should normally be marshalled to assist

runners and the extent of marshalling should be thought out in relation to the expected traffic density.

- An alternative 'bad weather route' should be planned, so that it is available to be deployed at the last minute if necessary.
- Consider if you might need radios, which are available to borrow from the FRA Equipment Officer. The FRA also has other equipment for loan, including tents and rubber mats for entry to race fields.
- Overlap of outgoing and returning runners should be minimised, especially if it may take place on a narrow track or restricted area.
- Access to the route for marshals, first-aiders and emergency vehicles should be identified in advance.
- It is important to allocate enough space and to provide adequate facilities, for proper management of registration, as this is the key point in tracking competitors.
- Start and finish areas need to be able to accommodate the runners, plus sponsors tents/vehicles, registration tent etc. Toilets should be available.
- Car parking is an important aspect and car parks should be large enough, clearly indicated and marshalled if necessary. Marshals in car parks should be adults and be briefed on avoiding personal injury, for example by standing in locations where collision with a vehicle is unlikely. Emergency vehicles should be available if there is a danger that cars will become stranded.

#### *Entry Requirements and the Entry Form*

- The Race Organiser is fully entitled to impose qualifications (for example based on experience) on runners and relay teams. These should be spelled out in the event information and perhaps on the entry form.
- Entry fees should be the same for all entrants in each category (senior, junior etc). The FRA does not apply a levy to unattached fell runners. Pre-entry and entry on the day may be charged at different rates. A small variation to allow for the different costs of on-line or credit card administration is permissible
- If the race will be recorded on video or photographs by the Race Organisation, then competitors (parents or legal guardians in the case of junior races) should be informed. This can be done by including the following sentence in the 'disclaimer' on the entry form:-

"I accept that the Race Organiser may use photographic or video equipment for the purpose of monitoring the race".

- It is not necessary to ask permission from competitors for professional and semi-professional photography companies to record the race, though it would be courteous to make this known at race registration if the photographer has been specifically invited. If a competitor or parent objects they should be referred to the photographer.
- The Data Protection Act applies to personal information (including the entry forms and any videos or photographs) collected and retained for the event. Race Organisers may keep entry forms until all results are agreed and all possible consequences of the event can be assumed to have come to his or her attention.

#### *Access, environment and permissions*

- Our actions contribute towards damage and disturbance on the ground and we should minimise the impact of a fell event and try whenever possible to leave the area without a trace of our passing.

- If significant parts of the route are on roads, or major roads are crossed, the Local Authority Safety Advisory Group (SAG), if it exists, should be consulted. SAGs, or equivalent bodies in some areas, provide independent advice, but the responsibility for the safety of the event still rests with the Race Organiser.
- A key part of good event planning is consultation with landowners, other interested agencies and farmers.
  - Establish who owns the land and contact the owners in good time to obtain their permission. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act, Crow Act (2000), indicates that this should be in writing. The Act restricts access for organised events. The restrictions are not a 'rule' but suggestions of ways in which races can be planned and organised to minimise the effect of the event on the environment.
  - In practice it can be very difficult to identify, and then contact, land owners and managers. The Land Registry, or other local landowners, may be able to assist. Be prepared to use e-mail, personal visits and letters, but don't rely on a written reply. Log all contacts or attempted contacts for reference. A letter is useful with the key individuals, as they may not remember dates and times from a conversation 'over the farm gate'.
  - Make sure that the owner fully understands your proposals and that the costs of any damage may be reimbursed.
  - Consult tenants who manage land on a day to day basis, even if the course is on public footpaths or open access land. They may have livestock on part of the course and can also help by opening gates etc. It is useful to have made contact and at least informed them of the event in case of any problems arising during the event.
  - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSIs) and Nature Reserves. Natural England will be able to provide land ownership details.
  - National Parks are managed by a Park Authority who can advise on other restrictions or considerations.
  - The National Trust should be consulted if the route passes over their land.
- Check the route before and after the event to record any damage, preferably using photographs or video.
- It is also courteous to contact owners and tenants after the event has taken place, to thank them for their cooperation and check if there are any follow-up actions.

#### *Sensitive Issues – wild-life, crops and animals*

- Wildlife Habitats. Certain types of habitat may be particularly vulnerable to damage, e.g. Summit plateaux, scree and rock gullies which support fragile fern, moss and lichen communities. Crags and rocky outcrops may have important nesting sites for birds of prey and others such as the Ring Ouzel. Much of our moorland is of international importance for its unique bird population and these birds and their nests are easily disturbed, resulting in increased mortality.
- Meadows are easily trampled, affecting wildlife and reducing hay crops for the farmer.
- Avoid planning races during the breeding season, mid-March to the end of June, or stay on well-used existing routes. Grouse moors should be avoided prior to a shoot, as jobs may be at risk if the area is disturbed and the birds dispersed. Consult relevant estates in advance for dates. Mark and marshal any known vulnerable sites, from your consultation, on routes that must be avoided.
- Farm Livestock. Consult early with landowners and tenant farmers regarding sensitive stock, stock movements and if necessary, plan temporary stock protection from the route or removal especially near the start and finish areas. Care should be taken where there are

cattle on the planned route as there have been problems with cattle stampeding, particularly during thunderstorms.

- Dogs. Dogs should not be permitted in a race; they pose a threat to wildlife, livestock and fellow competitors. The CroW Act does not permit dogs in the new access areas, except on a lead on an existing right of way.

### *Check-points and marshals*

Check points are points that define the course and need not be manned if a 'self-clip' system or electronic dibber is used. However most checkpoints will also have one or more marshals. The job of the marshals is a) to record which runners visit the check point, b) to assist with monitoring the race (counting numbers of runners). Marshals are generally not in place to offer assistance or help with route finding to runners and this may be incompatible with doing a good job of monitoring the race. However Marshals will clearly have no alternative but to assist in cases of real emergency, such as a severely distressed or injured runner.

Areas to be addressed include:-

- Choice of marshals. Ideally marshals should be experienced fell walkers or runners familiar with the terrain to enable them to find the correct location and keep themselves safe while there. They should possess a range of skills to enable them to carry out their duties, including monitoring runners, communicating with race control using available equipment and handling both runners and public alike in an effective manner. First Aid skills may be valuable.
- How to brief marshals, so that they know where they are located and the processes they will be expected to carry out. Typically they will need to know opening and closing times for their post, cut off times if applicable and when they can leave their post even if the number of runners checked through has not reached the expected level. Verbal briefings are valuable but may not be possible, in which case written instructions and e-mail can be used.
- The activities the marshals should undertake and whether they need to record numbers only, or also times.
- The number of marshals required at each location. Allow additional marshals to answer queries or help runners at remote locations, so that the process of recording numbers does not get interrupted. At busy checkpoints an additional marshal may be required to handle communications.
- The equipment to be carried by the marshals a) for their own comfort and safety, b) for their job in monitoring runners and c) to offer assistance on the hill.
- A communication policy using radio/mobile phones if possible, but based on verbal communications if not. It may be necessary to have additional marshals able to return to race HQ with messages. Messages can also be carried by runners and by a sweeper. Third party organisations such as Raynet can help with radio communications.
- Whether to use sweepers, who can be valuable to help monitoring the race and to communicate with marshal posts.
- How to be confident that marshals are in place at the required time.

### *Additional resources*

The Race Organiser may call on a range of additional resources as required, for example

- First Aid help, either from the two major First Aid organisations, or other organisations or individuals with the necessary skills.
- Mountain Rescue organisations can be asked to provide emergency assistance on the course. If not involved it may still be useful to inform them that the event is taking place.

### *Emergency planning*

Consideration should be given to how to cope with emergency situations, for example:-

- Loss of a runner, requiring the initiation of a search.
- A medical emergency either on the hill or at Race HQ.  
Some events now use numbers which have a section on the back where runners can include contact details and also record any pre-existing medical conditions. Runners cannot be relied on to complete this information, but it may be valuable to people with known medical conditions.

### *Team Briefing*

All marshals, helpers and organisations providing assistance at the event should be briefed, so that they know their own roles and what to do in the event of unexpected or emergency situations. Communication and clear responsibilities are key to the smooth running of the event.

## **3. Juniors**

For Junior competitors inexperience, and their greater vulnerability to bad weather, may require the Race Organiser to take additional steps to minimise risks during the event. The steps required may also depend on the age category of the Junior competitors in question. This may involve taking decisions on behalf of the runners which would normally be taken by the runners themselves in senior events.

- The distance limits, based on age, should be observed.
- For club competitions or race series the club or Race Organiser is free to use 'age on 1st January' (or any other date) in the entry criteria if they choose. This assists the statistician in compiling good records and deciding clear category winners. Other dates than 1st January can be used, provided that runners are not entered in a longer race than is allowed for their age on the day of the event.
- The terrain should be less severe, avoiding boulder fields, crags, or excessively steep slopes
- The course should be marked at least on critical sections, to reduce the risk of junior runners straying off-course
- If Junior races are held in conjunction with Senior races the start times should be calculated so that competitors do not mix in a dangerous way on sections of the course.
- The Race Organiser should set kit requirements for Junior runners on the basis that Juniors may be more vulnerable to hypothermia than adults.
- The Race Organiser should consider how junior runners will meet up with their parent or accompanying adult after the event.

## **4. On the day**

### *On-the-day decisions*

- Review of weather conditions and last-minute decisions on kit requirements and possible route changes. It is useful to take a copy of a local weather forecast for the record to back up any decisions.
- Race organisation is important and the Race Organiser should plan that he/she has enough time to take control of any unexpected situations and is not tied to a routine activity. Ideally a race HQ will be away from all start and finish activity to enable decisions to be made in an unhurried way. Race Organisers of larger events may wish to appoint deputies able to manage the routine activities, allowing the Organiser to handle exceptions.
- Cold wet weather increases the risk of hypothermia in runners and very hot conditions will increase the risk of over-heating (heat stroke). The pre-race information and briefing

should include advice on the precautions which should be taken. In very hot conditions the Race Organiser may insist that runners carry a minimum volume of liquid. Extra water stations should be provided if possible and runners can be advised of the availability of natural water along the course.

### *Event registration*

To handle registration and preparation of the runners for the event, consider the following:-

- Entry details may have been gathered on paper or using an on-line system. These are vital documents to link with any system of counting runners and to provide a record of car registration numbers, emergency contacts etc. to sort out any problems later on.
- There are several options for the logistics of handling runners prior to the start and giving out numbers. Normal good practice is to use consecutive vest numbers, but more than one registration desk may be required for large events, which makes this difficult. Junior races can use different number sets for each age group, to assist the identification of runners. Obviously the processes and the man-power required will vary depending on the system in use, whether it be the 'sticky label' system or a more automated chip/dibber approach. The key requirement is to know which runners register and are accepted into the race, their entry details and vest number.
- Race information additional to the mandatory list might be useful at registration, for example:-
  - course description, including any unusual obstacles
  - any route changes from previous years (including the bad-weather route if there is a possibility it will be required)
  - emergency assistance or first-aid points, safe routes back to base for runners who abandon the race including safe compass bearings.
  - contact phone number to enable runners to contact race HQ
  - location of refreshments
  - location of toilets
  - directions to the start and finish
- Runners may arrive at race registration without the required kit, and it may be valuable for Race Organisers to have some items available for purchase, for example race maps and emergency food.
- Kit checking can be carried out according to the weather conditions and severity of the course. A common practice for the most demanding races is to require kit to be checked prior to registration and issuing the number, to make the processes and flow of runners more efficient. Kit checks at the entrance to the start field are an efficient way of knowing that those starting have the kit they need. Final control can be carried out if needed by checking the kit carried by runners at the finish.
- Verbal race briefings can be useful, provided that runners can be assembled into a small area so that the speaker can be heard by all.

### *Monitoring the race*

Information about the progress of the race will be valuable to enable the Race Organiser to make decisions during the event and manage any non-routine situations. Points to consider include:-

- How to count the number of starters. For most races the number of entry forms collected and the number of vest numbers issued will be adequate. The largest and most demanding races may consider having an additional count, to allow for the possibility that runners may abandon after registration and before the start, or that late-comers may decide to run the course starting well after the main field. Options include shepherding all the runners into a pen prior to the start, or having an early checkpoint where runners can be counted (perhaps on the basis of a tag-drop).

- Accurate counting of runners at checkpoints relies on marshals being able to identify competitors, normally by actually seeing a vest number. If the runner covers the number (for example in bad weather) they should be asked to expose their number briefly, perhaps by opening a cagoule. Having the runners shout out their number is prone to errors.
- At busy checkpoints a mini-tunnel arrangement may assist the flow of runners (who may appear from any direction) and help to ensure accurate individual number identification.
- There are several options based on technology, including dibbers/chips, but also simpler systems such as numbered wrist bands or tear-off tags on the number. Marshals may need to be prepared to help runners cope with a tear-off tag in difficult weather conditions.
- Normal practice is to have two marshals at a check-point, one calling out competitor vest numbers and the other writing them down. At busy races and the early check-points multiple pairs may be required, plus backup marshals for other activities.
- Communication between marshal points and race HQ is valuable in that it enables an accurate runner count to be made known to the marshals. A similar job can be handled by a sweeper.
- The design of the finish funnel is important to ensure that all finishers can be recorded, but to prevent runners who have already finished either getting in the way or coming back through the funnel a second time. Normal practice is to have two pairs of officials at the finish, with one pair recording finishing times and the second pair recording running numbers. Electronic systems simplify this, but a manual backup is a sensible precaution in case of equipment failure.

*How to arrange two independent systems for counting race starters and finishers.*

The key objective is to employ a robust system to account for runners, but also to have a secondary back-up system in case of uncertainty, to support a decision on whether to implement an emergency plan.

- The simplest system is
  - to collect paper entry forms and also to keep careful count of the number of vest numbers issued (made simpler if the numbers used are in consecutive numerical order with an obvious start number).
  - to employ a pair of finish funnel officials recording the vest numbers of finishers and another pair taking times, but noting the total number of runners finishing.
- An additional check is to use a 'matrix' system, with an official marking-off runners on a sheet of numbers. This can be used at the finish, or at check-points as an additional confirmation of numbers.
- Electronic systems have the advantage that they require little manpower, but some kind of manual fall-back should be available in case of failure.
- Numbers can be supplied with tear-off tags to give a physical record of runners accounted for.
- A continuously running video record of the finish funnels can be useful, for example to establish finishing order in the case of a dispute. The output of course is only available after the event.
- If a runner cannot be accounted for it may be possible to search for his/her car in the event car-park. If the car can be found it establishes that the runner has not gone home.

*At the finish*

- Normal practice is to provide water at the finish. It is valuable also to have some first aid provision and someone available to help runners in distress, for whatever reason.



- The Race Organiser and their team can move from operational race management to close-down activities when all competitors have been accounted for.

## 5. After the finish

There are a number of activities to accomplish after all runners have been accounted for:-

- The prize-giving should be held as soon as possible, as no-one likes hanging around for presentations.
- Marshals may need to be redeployed, for example to help with traffic management out of a car park, or to help with runners in difficulties.
- First Aid organisations will always compile their own log sheets of any treatment given, and the Race Organiser should get a copy of these on the day if possible. If a runner has to go to hospital an FRA accident report is required.
- It is generally not possible to debrief marshals on the day, as they tend to finish their duties at different times and the Race Organiser may well be busy around the finish time. A useful approach is to send out requests for feedback with the thank-you e-mails.
- Try to get feedback from everyone else involved with race organisation, to enable snags and problems to be better handled in future years. Competitors will comment freely on forum sites or to race web-sites and provide useful feedback. It will be useful to log your information for future use.
- Posting the results and giving links to any photographs, is eagerly awaited by competitors and should be done as soon as possible. This really helps to promote the event as a high-quality race.
- It is good practice to get in touch with anyone affected by the race, notably to thank landowners who have given permission, or local residents who may have been inconvenienced by road closures or car parking. This helps to get the event approved for next year.

## 6. Race Organiser resources

There are a number of additional resources for Race Organisers on the FRA website (under FRA – Organisers). The FRA and other race organisers may be interested in ideas and documents you have so do consider making them more widely available.

If you need help in organising your race you are encouraged to ask the FRA for advice, or to put you in touch with another more experienced race organiser to help you.

The authoritative guidance document, including legal requirements, but also giving a wide range of advice on event organisation, is the Home Office “Good Practice Safety Guide for small and sporting events” (the Red Guide). This publication is currently withdrawn pending revision, but a copy of the previous document can be obtained from the FRA.

Another very comprehensive source of advice is the RunBritain “Race Directors’ Handbook”, which is aimed at road and trail events, but also has a lot which is relevant to fell running. This can be obtained from the UKA ‘RunBritain’ web-site (<http://www.runbritain.com/race-directors-club>) or from the FRA.

The UKA advice on cross-country event organisation also has much of relevance to fell race organisation and can be found at [www.britishathletics.org.uk/competitions/useful-documents](http://www.britishathletics.org.uk/competitions/useful-documents).