



# **Hazards & Risks on Dartmoor and other moorland terrain**

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**A HAZARD is anything that has the potential to cause harm. A RISK is the likelihood and severity of that harm. All team TMs and staff have a duty prior to training to identify and record significant hazards and to ensure that any risk involved is reduced to an acceptable level.**

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Team TM should conduct a risk assessment (or vary an assessment made previously) **prior to any training** for Ten Tors. This is a legal requirement for schools and recognised best practice for any other establishment. Potential hazards specific to that programme of training should be identified and analysed, the likelihood and severity of risks considered, and appropriate action taken to reduce any risk that is unacceptable. This is achieved either by eliminating it altogether or by applying adequate control procedures to ensure that it remains at an acceptable level. The assessment should focus essentially on those aspects for which the TM has prime responsibility and extends from travel arrangements and staffing to the all-important training programme.

**Prior to any training**, the TM must ensure that the group has been carefully selected, is walking fit, has the right equipment and knows how to use it, and is properly trained in navigation, first aid, risk assessment, safe cooking methods and emergency

## **HAZARDS**

**Terrain** Incurring **physical injury** through falling from rocks, slipping on clutter (especially when covered by heather), sliding on slimy stream boulders or tripping over grass tussocks.

Becoming stuck in a **bog**. Dartmoor is notorious for its bogs, but they are not that numerous and should present a threat only to the unobservant.

procedures. Moreover, having ensured that the team is competent, the TM remains responsible for supervising the training and for having a fall-back plan in case, for example, the weather worsens or assistance is required. Before the Challenge, the TM is required to certify that the team is competent to participate.

**During training** the TM, trainers and/or team leaders should continue to assess the hazards and risks, informed by their route plan. This dynamic, or ongoing, risk assessment is assisted by having rehearsed procedures that can be implemented to reduce the risk back to an acceptable level.

## **HAZARDS AND RISKS**

The hazards of Dartmoor and other wild areas are numerous and can be life threatening to the untrained and inexperienced, especially the young. However, even allowing for time of year and prevailing weather conditions, none should endanger a team that appreciates the hazards and risks involved. Education and training should be designed to ensure individuals are competent to avoid or overcome them.

The following list identifies some of the hazards that may be encountered on Dartmoor in training - it is not exhaustive and should be augmented as necessary.

## **HAZARDS**

**Flooded Rivers and other water hazards** Dartmoor rivers rise very rapidly after rain. **Crossing a swift-flowing river is EXTREMELY DANGEROUS and must not be attempted except where the river is very narrow and less than knee deep.** Avoidance is the key. If safe to cross, rucksack straps should be loosened and chest and hip belts undone. The team must help one another across. If there is no bridge nearby, go upstream to a safe crossing and, if

## Weather-related

Suffering from **exhaustion**. Walking with a pack on Dartmoor for many hours is extremely demanding for anybody whose fitness level or intake of energy-giving food is inadequate or whose navigation skills are poor.

Becoming **lost** in inclement weather. Morning mists can be dense, and even in clear conditions visibility can deteriorate rapidly as cloud rolls in across the moor.

Facing a **moorland fire**. Dry weather, even in Spring, can lead to extensive fires.

Being struck by **lightning**. While thunder is unnerving, the risk from lightning is very real.

Suffering from **heat illness** (hyperthermia). Whatever the weather, there is always a risk of heat related illness due to the nature of the exercise. The risk is far greater in full sun.

Suffering from **cold injuries** (hypothermia and non-freezing and freezing injuries) most typically arising from a combination of strong wind and rain. A change in the weather can rapidly catch out a walker who is inappropriately clothed or unfit or ill-equipped.

## Drinking Water and Hygiene

Becoming ill through drinking impure **moorland water**. Although the streams may look refreshing, the presence upstream of a rotting animal carcass could soon bring an early end to the day's walking!

## Overnight Camp

Stoves are an essential part of an overnight expedition. To avoid the potential for serious burns, be familiar with their safe use in all weather conditions, especially siting and re-fuelling.

## Adders

necessary, return to a point on the opposite bank that allows the route to be resumed.

Being bitten by an **adder**. Adders are plentiful but timid. In spring they may be slow to escape the approaching boot and, through feeling threatened, could bite.

## Ticks

Being bitten by a **tick**. Ticks are exceedingly small and similar to mites. Adults have eight legs and beaklike mouths adapted for sucking blood: in this country they are parasitic on sheep and deer. Ticks can latch on to exposed skin or get into body folds and transfer disease. Dress appropriately and be aware of the signs and symptoms of Lyme Disease.

## Live Firing

Entering a live firing range danger area when it is in use. Dartmoor continues to provide vital training for the Armed Forces. Check for firing times on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dartmoor-firing-programme> and if warning signal red flags are hoisted do not enter.

## Unexploded Ordnance

Being injured by **unexploded ordnance**. Dartmoor has been used for military training for over 125 years, and during the Second World War both north and south moors were used to prepare forces for the D-Day invasion. Unexploded ordnance that works its way to the surface could, if touched, explode and kill.

## Vehicles

Being struck by a **vehicle**. On narrow Devon lanes and moorland roads vehicles can present a hazard to pedestrians.

## Medical emergencies

Incidents may arise that involve a member of staff or the group. A group's remote location may make the management more demanding.

## **BE PREPARED**

**With forethought and proper preparation, thousands of people venture safely across Dartmoor every year. Even those who do have problems are normally able to help themselves through their own experience or through knowledge acquired during training. Team Managers have a duty to ensure not only that their walkers know the hazards that exist and the risks that may arise but also they know how to counter them.**



5. Haytor

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