

Dartmoor Weather

By Andy Hodges, Revised October 2025

Dartmoor weather can be fickle (to say the least!) and vary greatly from one part of the moor to another. Remaining vigilant of changes and adapting accordingly are key aspects to safe team management. A sound understanding of the forecast weather which will be part of your Risk Assessment.

Undoubtedly you will be aware of general weather conditions and as your training day approaches observations will inform your judgements as you fine tune your day.

Main weather considerations for Dartmoor

Yellow, Amber and Red Weather Warnings from the Met Office should inform your decision making before leaving base. Ignore them at your peril.

Many roads will be lower priority for the Highways Agency. Early morning ice should be expected. Lanes can be flooded as they become waterways. It may be unsafe to travel to the moor.

Early morning ice on paths can be a danger for walkers, clear bridges tend to ice over and the ice may be invisible.

River levels are affected by current and recent conditions but the speed with which flow rates increase will also be affected by the preceding days' rainfall.

Beware of camping close to rivers as they can rise dramatically overnight.

Conditions on the moor will be worse than lower areas, and on the high moor it will be worse than in car parks. Rainfall on high ground can be double that of lower sites. Wind speeds will also be significantly higher. Temperatures will also be lower and, combined with wind and rain, cause hypothermia.

Weather will change and often does not follow forecasts accurately. Plans for evacuation should be made as part of the route planning stage and included in risk assessments.

Mist and fog are common on Dartmoor, all those responsible for navigation should be experienced and competent in poor visibility navigation.

High winds can hamper walking and may have a significant impact on timings and can cause fatigue. Changing routes or evacuating teams may be necessary, particularly if groups are unlikely to reach campsites.

Dry weather, especially with high winds, makes for a significant fire risk. Have plans in place for communication, diversion and evacuation.

Checklist

A sensible checklist for a Team Manager prior to embarking on training would be:

- 1: Do I have an up-to-date weather forecast?
- 2: Have I adapted plans according to recent weather warnings?
- 3: Are the walking groups capable of making informed decisions if weather conditions change?
- 4: Can we safely get to Dartmoor given the road conditions?
- 5: Do I have plans to evacuate groups in the case of drastic weather changes?
- 6: Are weather conditions and warnings part of my risk assessment?
- 7: Are all the group clothed and equipped for the likely conditions?

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/> and search/save Princetown, High Willhays, Postbridge for which there are specific forecasts.

<https://www.yr.no/en> is a Norwegian site offering information for High Willhays, Postbridge and Princetown.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2636174> for a Tavistock forecast:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2639885> for a Princetown forecast.

