



Medical and Evacuation Procedures

Australia 2020

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Introduction

Medical screening

As with all expeditions careful planning is essential to ensure that all individuals enjoy a safe successful field course. Some members of the course team (including all volunteers and staff) may have significant pre-existing health problems or disabilities, which in the field, could potentially lead to problems.

Medical questionnaire - All participants will be required to enter their medical details onto the Operation Wallacea data portal. Details of how to log on are sent out upon receiving the booking from the participant. The data is stored securely and is initially only available to certain Operation Wallacea and Nature Glenelg Trust (NGT) staff members, and, for groups of school students, the teacher leading the group.

Screening - All medical forms are assessed by Operation Wallacea and NGT. We may seek to contact the participant to gather further information, which they would then enter on to the portal. Following the initial screening, the details are then passed to the relevant on site staff. First aid trained staff are able to assist an injured or sick person in the first minutes after an illness or injury occurs, but they are not medical professionals. First aid trained staff are able to determine when external medical treatment is required.

Roles in the event of an Emergency

Carefully planned evacuation protocols are in place. All staff will have training on the evacuation procedures and protocols.

Once a major incident leading to an evacuation is identified, the Course Manager will take overall control and will decide the level of emergency evacuation required for the patient. These are classified as either: Medium Priority, High Priority or Emergency.

Medium Priority – Cases in which the patient is in no immediate danger but the onsite facilities are unable to cope were their condition to deteriorate. An example of this would be dehydration due to sickness. This requires the patient to be moved as quickly as possible to the nearest appropriate suitable facilities.

High Priority – Cases where the patient's health is at risk if immediate action is not taken. An example of this is a broken bone. This requires transportation, via specially arranged vehicles to medical facilities available.

Emergency Priority – Cases requiring the fastest possible transfer via ambulance.

Medical Facilities in Country

Camps

There are first aid trained staff on site at Mount Burr Swamp. Staff are familiar with the local environment including risks and hazards, and are able to assess first aid situations, treat as necessary in the field, and determine the need for further specialist medical attention. Injuries/illnesses that cannot be treated in field will be transported to medical facilities in Millicent (30 min) or Mount Gambier (40 min).

Anti-Venom

Anti-venoms specific to the venomous snakes of south-eastern Australia are available at Millicent Hospital and Mount Gambier Hospital. Travel to either of these hospitals by car from Mount Burr Swamp takes 30-40 minutes. Snakebite first aid will be applied on site before transfer to hospital, and the hospital will be contacted before departure to ensure anti-venom availability.

Facilities in Millicent

Suitable for medium priority evacuations from field courses at Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve.

Millicent and District Hospital and Health Service
51 Mount Gambier Road, Millicent
(08) 8733 0100

Millicent Hospital provides acute services ranging from in-hospital care to specialist surgical procedures. The Accident and Emergency Department is available 24 hours seven days a week.

All hospitals within Limestone Coast Health Network work collaboratively to support the patient care needs of the region. Patients requiring higher levels of care may be transferred to the larger nearby Mount Gambier Hospital, or to a metropolitan health service (in Adelaide) using MedStar emergency retrieval service or the Rural Flying Doctor Service.

Facilities in Mount Gambier

Suitable for medium, high and emergency priority evacuations from field courses at Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve.

Mount Gambier and Districts Hospital and Health Service
276-300 Wehl Street North, Mount Gambier
Ph: (08) 8721 1200
Fax: (08) 8721 1579

Mount Gambier Hospital is a well-equipped regional hospital and provides acute services ranging from in-hospital care to specialist surgical procedures. The Accident and Emergency Department is open 24 hours, seven days a week. This is the largest and best equipped hospital in the region. Patients requiring very high levels of care may be transferred to an Adelaide facility.

Communications

The field course site, Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve, has reliable mobile phone signal which can be used for both routine and emergency communications. The most reliable service is provided by Telstra.

Transfers

All bus and vehicle transfers have mobile phones with the drivers.

Evacuations from Various Field Sites

Camps and survey sites in Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve

Survey sites within the Reserve are accessible by vehicle and an injured/ill patient can be transferred easily to the main camp area, or to nearby medical facilities if necessary. Evacuation by car to Millicent Hospital is 30 min, or to Mount Gambier Hospital 40 min. In case of urgent attention required the ambulance service will be called.

Reporting and Logging

During evacuations it is crucial that a log is kept by the Course Manager detailing times, personnel involved and all relevant details of each step of the evacuation process.

A full safety assessment must be carried-out after all evacuations and if a similar incident is likely all activities must be stopped until the situation has been rectified.

Mass Evacuations and Disaster Management

Although the overall likelihood is low, the most likely emergency scenario to occur is bushfire. The official Fire Danger Season in South Australia generally runs from November through to April; the exact dates are published prior to the Fire Danger Season each year. During the Fire Danger Season restrictions are placed on lighting fires (such as campfires) to reduce the chances of large fires starting. These restrictions are escalated when a Total Fire Ban Day is declared (no campfires allowed). The likelihood of a bushfire occurring nearby to Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve at the time of the field course is low; however, it is possible.

There are 15 Fire Ban Districts in the state of South Australia; the field course site is located within the Lower South East Fire Ban District. Fire Danger Ratings are issued at 5pm daily during the fire season for the following day; this information is publicised via television news, weather apps, emergency apps, and the Country Fire Service (CFS) website (https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/site/bans_and_ratings.jsp).

From lowest to highest, the Fire Danger Ratings are: Low-Moderate, High, Very High, Severe, Extreme, and Catastrophic. On days of Extreme and Catastrophic Fire Danger scheduled activities will be modified, and participants may be evacuated to a nearby suitable area (either within the township of Mount Gambier or Hutt Bay Wetlands Restoration Reserve – another NGT property). As the ratings are published in the evening of the proceeding day, preparations to evacuate can be undertaken in a calm manner with the evacuation to occur in the morning of the day in question.

Vehicles must only drive on designated tracks within the Reserve on days of Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger.

Access to Mount Burr Swamp Restoration Reserve is via three gates on the northern boundary to Kilsby Lane. Mount Gambier lies 40 min to the south-east and due to wind conditions during fire danger weather travel in this direction is likely to be clear.

Due to nearby land-use and fire monitoring systems in place, in the event of a fire beginning near the field course site, emergency services will be very quick to respond.

In the extremely unlikely event that a bushfire approaches the field course site and evacuation is not possible, refuge may be taken on site in a dam.