



**Press Release**

**24 March 2022**

**For immediate release**

## **Don't let a slip ruin your trip**

### **Experts warn it's still time to #ThinkWINTER in the highlands**

Hillwalkers enjoying the warmer weather in the lowlands are warned against being caught out by harsher conditions in Scotland's mountains.

Although spring has arrived in the glens, upland areas are still experiencing real winter weather and conditions, with widespread snow lying in the mountains, much of it unavoidable for people heading for the summits.

And because of the warmer days and frosty nights, much of that snow has become hard and icy – a deadly skating rink for anyone not equipped with crampons and ice axe, and the know-how to use them.

Mountaineering experts and Mountain Rescue teams are urging people to make sure they are properly equipped and prepared, no matter how pleasant the weather is when they leave their car.

Ben Gibson, Mountain Safety Adviser for Mountaineering Scotland, said: "You can go from soft snow to hard ice in just a step in the mountains just now and, without crampons, keeping your feet can be impossible. Even on a gradual slope, if you lose your footing you can start to slide and very quickly build up momentum that can take you onto steeper ground, over rocks or over the edge of a cliff.

"On ice or harder snow it can feel easier to keep a grip going uphill, so you may not realise how precarious your situation is until you turn around and try to come back down.

"Properly fitted crampons can ensure you don't slip in the first place, and an ice axe gives you the means to stop a slip becoming an uncontrolled slide and fall.

"If you do come across unavoidable snow or ice, consider carefully whether you want to continue to the summit. Just because others are doing it, doesn't make it any safer or appropriate for you. Good judgement of the conditions is an important part of keeping yourself safe when enjoying a day in the mountains."

Kev Mitchell, Vice Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue, said: “Scottish Mountain Rescue volunteers have been busy across Scotland dealing with multiple slips, trips and falls. Even though the snow in the hills still looks pretty, it has turned into ice patches making conditions particularly treacherous.

“Without the proper equipment, such as ice axe and crampons, and knowing how to use them, it can be very easy to slip, which can turn into a nasty fall.

“Help our volunteer teams by, before heading to the hills, ensuring you are properly equipped and prepared for winter conditions. Check the mountain weather forecasts and be aware of your limits.

“Please remember if you are lost, in need of assistance or in an emergency in the mountains, dial 999 ask for POLICE then MOUNTAIN RESCUE and our volunteer teams will assist any hour, any day, any weather.”

Shaun Roberts, Principal at sportscotland National Outdoor Training Centre Glenmore Lodge, said: “Any slip on a snow patch can have a consequence and is avoidable. Even when it feels like a warm spring day, if there are snow patches on higher ground, having an ice axe and crampons and a bit of knowledge will make all the difference.”

Police Scotland Mountain Rescue Coordinator Inspector Matt Smith added: “There has been a significant rise in Mountain Rescue Incidents in recent weeks, with 40 percent more calls than the previous average. Dozens of persons have been assisted and a number of tragic deaths have resulted.

“Scotland’s Mountain Rescue Teams, particularly those on the west coast, have been working tirelessly to deal with this increase in demand. If you are visiting our outdoor spaces in the coming weeks I’d urge you to plan carefully from reliable sources and not to assume that social media images are a true reflection of the conditions you will encounter during your day even at lower levels.”

Hillwalkers are urged to remember: it might be spring in the glens, but in the mountains they should still #ThinkWINTER.

Information on climbing Scotland’s mountains in winter conditions can be found on the Mountaineering Scotland website at [www.mountaineering.scot/thinkwinter](http://www.mountaineering.scot/thinkwinter)

**Ends**

**Notes for editors:**

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