



Press Release

07 June 2016

For immediate release

Don't get lost with GPS!

Mountain experts warn that GPS and electronic gadgets don't make navigation skills redundant

With numbers of hill walkers soaring during the summer months, a reminder has gone out that the key to a safe return does not lie in gadgets.

Mountaineering experts have warned that electronic gadgets can even lead people *into* danger if they are not used properly.

Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Advisor with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, said: "Navigation devices such as GPS and satnav can be amazing tools – but only if people learn how to use them properly."

Walking in the Scottish mountains is well attested as a great way to improve physical and mental health, but people should remember that navigation can be challenging – particularly if the cloud comes down and visibility is lost. This is a time when many hill walkers will pull out their GPS, press a few buttons and expect their troubles to be over.

However, experience of Mountain Rescue Teams has shown that's not always the case. And it's not because the gadget is wrong.

Heather said: "Our GPS will do the job it's designed to. It will tell us exactly where we are and it will compute the most direct route from point A to point B. But it doesn't know whether there's a river, a steep cliff or even a whole mountain between A and B – that's what you have to know from understanding the map. And if you are going to be following the arrow on the GPS to get home, you need to know how to programme that information correctly into the device.

"This all demands knowledge from *you*. It's only with your input that a GPS can compute a safe route for you to follow.

"It's an attractive thought that purchasing an electronic gadget could solve all our problems in the mountains and keep us safe from harm. Recent trends with mountain rescue call-outs suggest in fact this is quite the opposite, and there have been cases where ignorance of how to use a GPS properly has actually resulted in a 999 call having to be made."

The basic skills of navigation remain essential in the hills and mountains of Scotland. As part of its role in improving safety in Scotland's mountains, the MCofS offers a number of heavily subsidised navigation courses, which give walkers an easy to follow practical introduction to map and compass skills which will make them safer and more confident in the mountains.

Details are available at the MCofS website at <http://www.mcofs.org.uk/navigation-courses.asp>

There are also courses available commercially in the proper use of GPS devices.

Ends

Notes for editors

Images for this press release are downloadable here:

http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/GPS_device_in_use.jpg

http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/GPS_device.jpg

Images of a GPS device on its own and of one being used by a walker

www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/heather_morning_2012.jpg

Image of Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Adviser with the MCofS

Further information

Contact Neil Reid, Communications Officer, on 01738 493941 or 07788871803 or neil@mcofs.org.uk

About the MCofS

- The MCofS acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering.
- The MCofS is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains.
- The MCofS is a membership organisation with over 12,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers.
- The MCofS also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- MCofS landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
- The Mountaineering Council of Scotland, The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP