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**Mountain safety advice on the use of micro spikes and crampons in winter**

With winter conditions on Scotland’s mountains are well and truly here, Mountaineering Scotland is urging hillwalkers and climbers to improve their understanding of winter equipment for use in icy conditions on hill paths and more technical terrain.

At the end of last winter, they asked hill-goers for their thoughts on using crampons and other traction devices like micro spikes in the winter mountains. With over 1,300 respondents, the survey highlighted that while many experienced walkers and climbers understood the appropriate use of micro spikes and crampons, a notable portion of less experienced hikers were unaware of the critical differences to when and where they are appropriate to use.

**Key Survey Findings:**

* **83% of respondents** use both micro spikes and crampons.
* **17% of respondents only ever use micro spikes,** primarily sticking to defined paths and tracks.
* **90% of micro spike users** prefer ‘spikes’ over ‘coils’.
* Some comments made in the survey highlighted issues with misinformation/ lack of information online, not adequately explain the appropriate use of micro spikes versus crampons.

Micro spikes are lightweight traction devices designed for walking on icy paths and tracks with low-angle inclines, typically 15–20 degrees. Despite their lightweight appeal and lower cost, micro spikes have limitations that make them unsuitable for steep or technical terrain.

Crampons, by contrast, are more robust, offering essential grip for steep, technical, or mixed mountain terrain where a slip could lead to a serious fall.

The Mountaineering Scotland survey revealed a growing consensus among hillwalkers and climbers that clearer guidance is needed. Many respondents expressed frustration at the lack of accurate information and the prevalence of misleading advice on social media.

Ross Cadie, Mountain Safety Advisor at Mountaineering Scotland said “The misconception that micro spikes and crampons are interchangeable can put people at serious risk in the mountains in winter. Our goal is to provide clear, practical advice to help people make informed decisions about the equipment they use.”

“Winter in Scotland’s mountains can be breathtakingly beautiful, but it’s also unforgiving,” Cadie added. “The right equipment and skills can mean the difference between a great day out and a dangerous situation.”

**Recommendations for winter hillwalkers:**

1. **Understand Your Equipment**: Learn the strengths and limitations of micro spikes and crampons.
2. **Choose Based on Terrain**: Micro spikes are ideal for icy paths; crampons are essential for steeper, more technical mountain terrain where a slip could result in serious consequences.
3. **Seek Training**: Consider a [winter skills course](https://www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/courses-and-events/courses) that covers the appropriate use of both tools, along with other key items of equipment including the ice axe.
4. **Stay Informed**: Avoid relying solely on social media for advice and seek trusted sources of information.

Find more information and guidance on the use of micro spikes and crampons [here](https://www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/thinkwinter/crampons-microspikes).

Mountaineering Scotland work closely with organisations in the outdoor industry, including Scottish Mountain Rescue, Mountain Training, Glenmore Lodge, and Scottish Avalanche Information Service (SAIS), to continuously develop and raise awareness on the advice and guidance for winter mountain safety. Look at their #ThinkWINTER campaign for more information: [www.tinyurl.com/ThinkWINTER2425](http://www.tinyurl.com/ThinkWINTER2425)

**ENDS**

**Images are available to download here:**

[Mountaineering Scotland micro spikes/ crampons infographic](https://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/thumbnail_Microspikes_VS_Crampons_Inforgraphic_LANDSCAPE.jpg)

[Micro spikes image](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/micro-spikes-25.jpg)

[Crampons image](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Crampons-25.jpg)

**Notes for editors:**

The Mountain Safety team at Mountaineering Scotland are continuously developing advice and guidance on the use of micro spikes and crampons to be shared on their website. For those looking to get into winter mountain hiking or wanting to brush up on their knowledge, we highly recommend doing some winter skills training.

For more information and resources on winter mountain safety and to book on to one of their courses, visit the [Mountaineering Scotland website](https://www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/courses-and-events/courses).

**For further information, quotes, and images, please contact:**

**Megan Murray**, Communications Officer, Mountaineering Scotland

E: megan@mountaineering.scot | 01738 493 941

**About:**

**Mountaineering Scotland**

Mountaineering Scotland is the membership and representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski tourers in Scotland, with a membership of 16,000 individual and club members and 150 affiliated clubs. We aim to inspire and encourage people to enjoy the benefits of walking, climbing and ski touring and provide information and skills training to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and responsible access in Scotland’s mountains and climbing venues.

Web: [www.mountaineering.scot](http://www.mountaineering.scot) | X: [@Mountain\_Scot](https://twitter.com/Mountain_Scot) | Facebook: [@MountaineeringScotland](https://www.facebook.com/mountaineeringscotland/) | Instagram:[@mountaineeringscotland](https://www.instagram.com/mountaineeringscotland/) | TikTok: [@mountaineeringscotland](https://www.tiktok.com/%40mountaineeringscotland?lang=en)