



Press Release

2nd March 2016

For immediate release

Watch the edge!

Guidance for mountaineers in poor visibility

Mountaineers all over Scotland delighted last weekend in perfect winter conditions, with clear blue skies and sun glinting off crisp white snowy hills.

It was the sort of glorious weekend when no-one could question why people take to Scotland's winter mountains.

But experienced mountaineers know that the weather isn't always like that, and with forecasts this weekend expected to be more mixed than last weekend's ideal conditions, climbers are being reminded of the dangers of cornices.

Found above cliffs and steep slopes, these projecting ledges of snow can be surprisingly hard to see in poor visibility. In fact last winter season 18 people walked over cornices.

Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Advisor with The Mountaineering Council of Scotland, said: "The Scottish Mountains are an awesome, inspiring and challenging environment which I would encourage all enthusiastic hill walkers and mountaineers to enjoy.

"But people do need to be cautious near corrie edges and avoid cornices."

In poor visibility, or in a white-out, these can be hard or even impossible to see, so navigation skills are essential for anyone venturing into the mountains so that they can avoid this hazard. Necessary skills include being able to take accurate bearings and walk on them, and knowing how to measure distance on a map and assess that on the ground using pacing and reading the ground.

Heather said: "There are also simple tips that can be real lifesavers: attaching your compass to your jacket so you don't lose it, and having your map in a small waterproof case so you can see the detail while protecting the map from the elements. Keeping your compass away from metal objects and your mobile phone is also essential as these can affect the bearing if in close proximity.

"I strongly recommend people invest in navigation skills training before venturing out in winter. Check out the Mountain Safety pages on the MCOFS website (www.mcofs.org.uk/mountain-safety.asp) and current weather (www.mwis.org.uk) and avalanche information (www.sais.gov.uk)."

End

Notes for editors:

Images for this press release are downloadable here:

http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/h_morning_northern_corries_feb_16.jpg

Caption: Heather Morning at the edge of the Northern Corries in the Cairngorms. The views are spectacular in clear weather, but the edge can be almost impossible to distinguish in poor visibility.

[http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/N_corries_feb16_\(1\).JPG](http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/N_corries_feb16_(1).JPG)

Caption: On the edge of the Northern Corries in the Cairngorms. Easy to see on a clear day, but almost impossible in poor visibility.

[http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/N_corries_feb16_\(2\).JPG](http://www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/media/N_corries_feb16_(2).JPG)

Caption: On the edge of the Northern Corries in the Cairngorms. Easy to see on a clear day, but almost impossible in poor visibility.

Further information:

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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 provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The MCofS is a membership organisation with over 12,500 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from **sportscotland**, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain weather forecasting, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- 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