

# Police urge people to take care hill walking and around beauty spots

## Police Scotland is urging people to take care hill walking and around beauty spots

Hill walkers and people visiting beauty spots are being urged to conduct outdoor recreation in line with government regulations and ensure they are prepared for all eventualities following a number of recent mountain rescue incidents in Scotland.



Over the past two months (December 2020 and January 2021), Police Scotland has received 46 calls to search and rescue incidents across the country. A total of six fixed penalty notices have been issued and six people charged with culpable and reckless conduct. The same period prior to the pandemic in 2019/2020 saw 55 such incidents recorded.

Police Scotland's three Mountain Rescue Teams work in partnership with volunteer Mountain Rescue Teams and other emergency services and have recently had to attend a number of incident where people have travelled out with their local authority areas and required assistance due to ill-preparedness.

On Saturday, 16 January, four men from Midlothian travelled to Crianlarich in one vehicle to climb Ben More. They had to be talked off the hill via phone and text from police and mountain rescue team, and also required ambulance assistance. The Coastguard Search and Rescue helicopter was also tasked to attend the incident. The group managed to walk themselves from

the hill and were all uninjured. The men, aged 23 and 24, were charged.

Access to a number of popular beauty spots has also been restricted by inconsiderate parking and large numbers of people travelling for outdoor recreation. This has led to increased police patrols needed in areas around the Pentland Hills Regional Park, Lomond Hills Regional Park and popular walking routes in Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire.

On Saturday, 9 January, a family from Edinburgh travelled to the Biggar area for a walk and had to be rescued with the assistance of police and Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue after their vehicle got stuck in snow.

Assistant Chief Constable Alan Speirs said: "I fully appreciate that the restrictions affect how we live our lives and spend our free time, however, the best way to stay safe is to stay at home. To protect the NHS we also need to protect our volunteers and emergency service colleagues who, by the nature of their work, put themselves at risk each time they're called to an incident.

"Particularly at the weekends we are seeing people travelling for leisure purposes out with their local authority areas and sometimes getting caught out by the change in weather conditions.

"We have been very clear that we will not be routinely stopping vehicles or setting up road blocks. However, officers may in the course of their duties come across people who are travelling from one local authority area to another.

"The Chief Constable has made it clear that our approach throughout the pandemic has not changed. Officers will continue to support people to follow the regulations and encourage them to take personal responsibility. The vast majority of people have stepped up to take responsibility and our determination and collective effort to tackle this virus

must now continue through these difficult times.

“If you do find yourself in need of assistance because of being lost, injured, or in an emergency when outdoors, then phone 999, ask for police then Mountain Rescue. You will be helped.”

Police Scotland supports Scottish Mountain Rescue #ThinkWINTER campaign which was launched in early December – please search for the hashtag #ThinkWINTER on social media and follow its channels.

The #ThinkWINTER quick checklist includes:

Check the mountain weather forecast – pay particular attention to wind speed, temperature and cloud cover.

Take warm layers, waterproof clothing, hat, gloves and boots with good grip plus a headtorch with spare batteries.

Pack plenty of food and drink to keep you going, plus some extra just in case.

Build up your navigation skills and confidence with shorter, smaller days before taking on bigger hills and longer days.

Be prepared to turn back if the weather or conditions change.

Let someone know where you are going, what time you will be back and what to do if you don't return when expected.