

Company: Thistle Trekking LTD	Remote Supervision Policy on Long Distance Trails	Compiled by: Scarlet Trevett
Date completed: March 2018	All procedures should be reviewed if changes are made to the trip, e.g. the group, transport, ratios etc.	Updated/Reviews: 24.1.2019

All groups should receive a clear briefing on the welcome evening that they must stay as a group and be able to see the guide at all times.

However, despite this direct instruction some customers on long distance trails will simply walk off in front. Since our groups are non-vulnerable adult groups we cannot necessarily enforce them to stay together, particularly on a route that is well way marked, for example The West Highland Way. Therefore, a policy of remote supervision can be considered by the guide.

Understanding Remote Supervision:

Thistle Trekking LTD has a 'duty of care' to all its customers. This is a legal obligation that requires we adhere to a standard of reasonable care while guiding. The law does not expect us to eliminate all risk, but we are required to protect people as far as is 'reasonably practicable.'

Therefore, as a guide you may feel it is more appropriate to remotely supervise some members of the group. In order to do this you need to be able to know where your group is all of the time, this may be an area rather than a point location. You must also be able to predict what they are likely to do next.

When remote supervision may be appropriate:

Customer(s) should only be remotely supervised by the guide if all the following criteria are met:

- The customer(s) in questions have made the decision to leave the rest of the group by walking off in front. **Customers who are at the back of the group must not be remotely supervised.**
- The guide must have suitable experience of the customer(s) decision making and feel they are able to follow the route. This may be built up progressively over the duration of a long distance trail. Therefore, remote supervision should not usually be considered on day 1. However, remote supervision may be used as the trek progresses, over short distances at first. Longer periods of remote supervision may be used as the customers' ability progresses throughout the duration of the trek.
- A meeting point must always be set by the guide. Often this would be an obvious path junction, a café, pub or other building.
- Navigation is simple. For example a well way-marked path or a section of path that will take the customer directly to a meeting point. For example, a way-marked section of the West Highland Way, or a non way-marked section of the East Highland Way that will result in following the path straight until you reach a very obvious feature such as a road or loch.
- Weather must not affect the difficulty of the above navigation. For example, in low cloud where way-markers could be missed the customers should not be remotely supervised.

- The consequence of the customer making a navigation error are small. For example, if they should miss a way-marker they will not venture into dangerous terrain (e.g. a scramble).
- There are no obvious hazards that the customer will need to undertake on their own, e.g. a river crossing, a scrambling section, an area of challenging bog.
- The guide should always notify the trek manager if any customers are going to be remotely supervised as soon as possible.
- They customers understands what to do if they feel that they have made a navigation error or they become unsure of their navigation. This will often be to stop and wait for the guide or turn back and walk back to the last obvious feature or way-marker or phone the guide.
- The customer has enough kit to keep themselves warm and comfortable should a navigation error be made and they need to wait for the guide to find them.
- The customer must have their own personal medication on them (not left with the guide or another member of the group) and they are made aware they will need to be able to deal with any medical incident without the support of the guide.

The Customers Understanding Of Remote Supervision:

Depending on the customers prior experience of guided walking treks their attitude to remote supervision may vary dramatically. Some may expect it (almost to the point of demanding it), others will feel it is unsafe and not appropriate at all. This may cause difficult group dynamics that the guide will need to deal with.

The Customer Understanding of our Policy on Remote Supervision:

Remote supervision should never be encouraged by either guide or trek manager. This is not a safety point, but simply a way to make guiding less stressful for the guide. Groups should be encouraged to stay together (and briefed to do so). Customers should always be made to feel they are solely responsible for their actions and navigation should they choose to walk off in front. However, remote supervision gives the guide the option to supervise when they feel this is safe, appropriate and the most reasonable course of action.

Risk Management:

In order to ensure Thistle Trekking LTD can continually review the safety and effectiveness of remote supervision we have a reporting system in place. Should there be an incident whereby remote supervision becomes problematic (for example the customer goes the wrong way or is not at the meeting point). It must be reported using the incident forms in the trek folder in as much detail as possible. The “Missing Person on Long Distance Trails” action plan may also need to be followed.