



## Safety protocol & emergency procedures

Expeditions to 6,000- and 7,000-meter peaks in Nepal

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### Objective & basic understanding

Climbs at altitudes ranging from 6,000 to over 7,000 meters take place in remote regions with limited infrastructure. This safety protocol describes the basic emergency and rescue procedures, the institutions involved, and the responsibilities of organizers and participants.

The aim is to minimize risks as much as possible and to ensure clear, comprehensible procedures in the event of an emergency.

Regardless of established rescue and support structures, high-altitude mountaineering remains a risky endeavor. The safety of an expedition depends largely on preparation, experience, decision-making, and the individual responsibility of all those involved.

This protocol does not guarantee a specific rescue outcome but describes the intended organizational framework under the conditions prevailing in Nepal.

## Emergency communication & initial report

In an emergency, fast, structured, and reliable communication is crucial for initiating appropriate rescue measures. This chapter describes the designated means of communication, relevant emergency contacts, and the information that must be provided in an initial report.

### Primary emergency communication

In high alpine regions of Nepal, mobile phone coverage is often unavailable or limited. Satellite-based means of communication are therefore essential for every expedition, in particular:

- ✓ Satellite phone (e.g., Iridium or comparable systems)
- ✓ Personal locator beacon (PLB)
- ✓ Garmin inReach or comparable devices
- ✓ VHF radio (where appropriate and available)

The primary contact in an emergency is made via the expedition leader or the supervising expedition operator, who takes over further coordination.

### Important emergency contacts (stored in satellite phone)

Contacting the expedition operator in Kathmandu is usually prioritized and serves to facilitate further coordination with the relevant Nepalese authorities.

Institution	Contact
Expedition operator	24/7-Notfallnummer
Nepal Police	100
Tourist Police (English speaking)	1144
Department of Tourism - Search & Rescue	+977-1-4256909
Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA), Kathmandu	+977-1-4440292 / 4440293
Own embassy in Nepal	individual

Table 1: Emergency numbers

### Information required for an emergency call (mandatory)

The following information must be provided as completely as possible for every emergency call:

- ✓ Exact location (GPS coordinates and altitude)
- ✓ Type of emergency (e.g., altitude sickness, accident, missing persons)
- ✓ Condition of the person(s) affected
- ✓ Number of people affected
- ✓ Current weather conditions
- ✓ Callback number or device number
- ✓ Name of the expedition and permit number

## Coordination & Rescue Procedure

In an emergency, rescue and evacuation measures in Nepal follow clearly defined official and operational procedures. This chapter describes the responsibilities, decision-making processes, and individual steps from situation assessment to medical care.

The timing, type, and feasibility of rescue measures depend largely on the weather, altitude, time of day, and official approval, and cannot be guaranteed.

## Step 1: Assessment & Approval

The Department of Tourism (DoT), together with the Nepal Police and, if necessary, the Nepal Army, coordinates the assessment of the situation and decides on the type and scope of rescue measures.

### **Please note:**

- ✓ Emergency medication or bottled oxygen may only be used as an immediate stabilizing measure in cases of suspected acute altitude sickness (HAPE/HACE).
- ✓ Initial medical measures do not replace an official decision on further rescue or evacuation steps.

## Step 2: Rescue operation

Depending on the situation and circumstances, the rescue will be carried out by:

- ✓ Helicopter (Nepal Army Aviation or private providers), or
- ✓ Ground rescue by the police, Armed Police Force, local mountain guides, and porters
- ✓ Use of medication or oxygen exclusively for short-term stabilization until the start of or during a rescue operation
- ✓ No entitlement to continue the expedition due to temporary symptom relief

Private providers include Fishtail Air, Shree Airlines, Kailash Helicopter Services, and Manang Air.

## Step 3: Evacuation

Evacuation is carried out either by:

- ✓ Direct pickup by helicopter (landing or winching), or
- ✓ Descent to a lower pick-up point in unfavorable conditions
- ✓ The need for evacuation remains even if there is temporary improvement after medication or oxygen administration
- ✓ Decision on evacuation or termination regardless of the subjective condition of the person concerned

## Step 4: Medical care

Further transport is to specialized medical facilities, e.g.:

- ✓ CIWEC Clinic, Kathmandu
- ✓ Medicit Hospital, Kathmandu
- ✓ Manipal Hospital, Pokhara

Further medical assessment and treatment take place exclusively in suitable medical facilities. Prior administration of medication or oxygen does not replace a subsequent medical examination.

## Medication & bottled oxygen

- ✓ Inform the expedition leaders about any medication you are carrying and taking regularly
- ✓ Take altitude-specific medication and use bottled oxygen exclusively at your own risk and only as an emergency measure in the event of acute altitude sickness (HAPE/HACE)
- ✓ Recognition that medication or oxygen does not replace a necessary evacuation or termination of the expedition

## Key challenges in rescues in Nepal

Rescue operations in high mountains are often limited by the following factors:

- ✓ Weather: most common limiting factor
- ✓ Altitude: reduced performance of humans and helicopters
- ✓ Terrain: limited landing options
- ✓ Costs: very high (often several thousand USD per operation)
- ✓ Communication: dependence on satellite-based systems

Delays or complete failure of rescue operations are possible under unfavorable conditions.

## Insurance - mandatory requirement

Adequate and verifiable insurance coverage is a mandatory requirement for participation in high-altitude expeditions and is an essential part of personal risk prevention.

The organizer accepts no liability for costs incurred due to insufficient or incorrect insurance coverage.

## Mandatory insurance

Before the expedition begins, all participants must provide proof of valid high-altitude mountaineering insurance that explicitly covers the following services:

- ✓ Rescue by helicopter at high altitude
- ✓ Emergency medical care
- ✓ Return transport or repatriation
- ✓ Mountaineering activities (not exclusively trekking)

Participation in the expedition is not possible without sufficient and proven insurance coverage.

## Obligations of participants

Participants are responsible for:

- ✓ Submitting proof of insurance in good time
- ✓ Carrying the insurance company's emergency number with them
- ✓ Checking the altitude limit and sum insured
- ✓ Accepting financial responsibility in an emergency

Participants' health-related obligations:

- ✓ Providing truthful information about their state of health and any relevant pre-existing conditions
- ✓ Immediately reporting any symptoms of illness or unusual physical reactions
- ✓ Only taking medication that affects their health or performance after consulting with the expedition leaders (if possible)
- ✓ Cooperation with medical assessments and acclimatization decisions made by the expedition leadership

## Role and responsibility of participants

Participants are obliged to realistically assess their physical and mental abilities, to ensure sufficient acclimatization, and to report health problems at an early stage.

The instructions of the expedition leaders must be followed. Prevention, careful preparation, and conservative decisions are the most important safety factors in high-altitude mountaineering.

## Practical minimum requirements for participants

- ✓ Proof of valid high-altitude mountaineering insurance, including rescue and evacuation; insurance details must be carried
- ✓ Carrying at least one functioning satellite-based communication device (e.g., Garmin inReach or Iridium phone)
- ✓ Availability of relevant documents and contacts (permit number, operator, embassy)
- ✓ Registration or consultation with relevant authorities (e.g., Himalayan Rescue Association)
- ✓ Participation exclusively through an experienced expedition operator with defined safety and rescue procedures

## Final note

This safety protocol describes established procedures and best practices but cannot guarantee absolute safety. High-altitude mountaineering involves objective risks and requires responsible behavior on the part of all participants.

## Confirmation of participant obligations

By signing this document, the participant confirms that they have read and understood this safety protocol. The participants undertake to report any health complaints or symptoms immediately, to provide truthful information about their own state of health, and to follow the instructions of the expedition leaders regarding decisions relating to safety and health.

The participant acknowledges that failure to comply with these obligations may endanger their own safety and the safety of others.

Place, date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed matter): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact & non-binding inquiry:

Questions about this document can be sent by email or via the contact form.

Mail: [marius.goedecke@mariusmountaineering.ch](mailto:marius.goedecke@mariusmountaineering.ch)

Contact formular: <https://www.mariusmountaineering.ch/#Kontakt-aufnehmen>

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