

New England Hillclimb Association

Worker Guidelines

The Bottom Line

Your primary job is COMMUNICATION. You are Control's eyes and ears on the hill. Your checkpoint will always have a land-line phone with headset and speaker; at some events, you will also have a hand-held radio. Use these to:

- Advise Control when any vehicle passes your location, up or down the hill.
- Report fluid spills, dragging or dropped parts, excessive smoke, drivers not wearing helmets or otherwise behaving unsafely.
- Report any cars off the course, stopped on the course, or spun out, so that checkpoints below you can red-flag (stop) the next car.
- Summon help (ambulance, wrecker, clean-up crew, etc.) when there is an incident at your checkpoint, or between your site and the checkpoint above/below you.

General Setup

Rules require that each checkpoint be manned by at least two people, one of whom is an experienced worker. The only exception to this is the first run of each day (the familiarization run—see below), when one worker is allowed. In any event, one person must ALWAYS man the phone. The second person is expected to help at incidents or keep the corner clean, manage any spectators who arrive at the site, etc. Trade off phone and mobile duty during the day.

By the time you reach your checkpoint, it should have the phone equipment, a fire extinguisher and fire glove, a broom and/or Speedy Dry, and a red flag already in place. Other items such as plastic bags and minor wire-repair tools are also, but not always, provided. On arrival, you are required to set up the phone and report in to Control (see Phone Customs, next page). Control might ask if you have any health conditions such as allergy to bee stings or Penicillin. Check with your coworker and report anything like this, even if you're not asked. Then put the rest of the gear where you can grab it easily but not trip over it, and unravel the red flag.

For the rest of the day, your job is to listen to phone/radio communications and keep track of all cars during their passage from the checkpoint below you to the checkpoint above you. In a normal event, this will keep you on the hill from early morning to late afternoon, with a midday break for lunch. Be prepared! A list of recommended gear is attached.

For insurance and safety reasons, you must sign releases before working on the hill. While most checkpoints are back from the road and outside the line of impact, you are still vulnerable to a car out of control. Also, you can get hurt incidentally—burns, cuts, strained muscles—while helping a driver in trouble or simply wandering around in the pits. Therefore, you must pay attention while cars are passing! Your own safety is FIRST PRIORITY.

What to Expect

A NEHA hillclimb starts with a **familiarization ("fam") run**, in which all competitors drive up the hill as a group. All hills in the series except Philo require cars to park at the top then return down as a group. (Philo has an up road and a down road, so drivers run continuously.) In any fam run or bringdown, you will report the FIRST CAR and LAST CAR past your checkpoint.

After the fam run comes as many **timed runs** as conditions will allow. Saturdays are practice days; Sundays are race days. In the event that a Sunday is rained out, trophies will be awarded based on Saturday's times.

In timed runs, cars will be launched from Start approximately one minute apart. Through the phones or speaker, you will hear Start coordinate with Finish to set the timer; then an announcement of car number, a countdown, then all other stations checking in as the car passes. You will **report EACH CAR past your checkpoint**. Start will launch the next car about the time the first car is halfway up the hill.

When the event is running at this tempo, you will have very little time to do anything so **pay attention**. Learn the rhythm of cars passing your checkpoint so that you will notice if one takes too long to reach you or the checkpoint after. On these mountains, where the roads switch back and forth, and sound and sight are blocked by rocks and trees, a car might go off or break down where you can't see or hear it. You will need to catch this as soon as possible so that following cars can be stopped and the missing driver sent help.

Ideally, Control will instruct a specific checkpoint to stop a car. In reality, sometimes things happen too fast so it may fall on your checkpoint to act on its own. This is why you must monitor communications at all times, so you know if a car is stopped above you with one coming up from below you. In that case, have your mobile worker grab the **red flag**, position him/herself in the driver's line of sight (but *not on the road*), hold the flag open, and sway it back and forth until the driver stops. Do not hold the flag by the handle and wave it, because it might wrap around the stick.

When the event is stopped for an incident, there might be other vehicles such as wrecker or ambulance moving up and down the hill. You are required to **report service vehicles** any time they pass you, up or down. Same with civilian cars when applicable.

While the event is running, stay off the road! **Wait until breaks** to rotate duties or make a pit stop or sweep your corner. Never travel farther off site than the next checkpoint uphill or downhill. Always report a worker leaving/returning to a checkpoint. Always report any cars that pull in at your site. Never pick up a dropped part with your bare hands.

After all drivers have had one run, they will return to the bottom. Then "double drivers" (people sharing cars) will have their run. When they have returned to the bottom, the next timed run will begin. Depending on number of entries, number of mishaps, and the weather, there will be **two to five timed runs per day**.

Phone Customs

No one will hear you on the phones (or radios) unless you press the button first. So wait until the airwaves are clear then press; speak; release; listen. You are allowed to speak only to Control unless Control gives you permission to speak to anyone else. Talk clearly and firmly into the mouthpiece, no need to shout. Note, however, that many of the race cars are extremely loud and you'll have to wait until they pass before you can communicate. Likewise, Control is often at the start and has a hard time hearing over the racket.

To speak to Control: "Control, this is Check Two" (or: "Control, this is Two").
Control will respond, "Go ahead, Two."

To respond to a course check: Control will announce intention to clear the hill, usually bottom to top.
Everyone responds in sequence: "One here, Two here, Three clear," etc.

To report normal car passage: After a car has safely passed your station, announce, "Car seven-one by Checkpoint Four" (or: "seven-one by Four") (or: "Wrecker by Four"). *Repeat until Control acknowledges*. Control will respond, "Check Four."

To report an incident: Many possibilities here. Wait until the airwaves clear unless you have an emergency (details follow). For ordinary incidents, report, for example:

"Control, this is Two. Car seven-one is leaking oil."

"Control, this is Two. Car seven-one just spun out above us and is continuing up the hill. We will need to sweep the corner."

Emergencies

While mishaps are common in this sport, serious injuries are rare. The safety equipment required in the cars works superbly, so most accidents look and sound worse than they really are. Nonetheless, you must treat all accidents as emergencies then downgrade later. *It is better to overreact than fail to act when quick response was needed.*

An emergency is a **hard impact**—one where the car is stopped suddenly by an object, versus a scrape, bump, or slide, after which the vehicle continues up the hill. Other emergencies are a **rollover** or a **car disabled on the course** and unable to pull out of the way. In these cases the event must be stopped immediately in order to send help and avoid further incidents.

When you call in an emergency, you do not have to wait for a break in talk or for Control to acknowledge you. Just break in with “Emergency at [your checkpoint]” and report what car, where it is, what help is required, and what you are going to do.

Examples: “Emergency at Six! Emergency at Six! Car seven-one just had a hard impact below us. Send ambulance and wrecker. I am sending my worker down to check him out.”

Or: “Emergency at Five! Car seven-one has stopped out of sight above us. We do not know if he’s on the course. Stop the next car. I am sending my worker up to check.”

Or: “Emergency at Seven. Car seven-one has rolled just before finish. Car is off the road on driver’s right. I can see the driver getting out.”

Control will ask for more information as necessary. Do not offer lurid details, especially when using a radio (off-site parties eavesdrop on our transmissions). If you’re not sure you have an emergency, play it safe and report the incident as one anyway. Many incidents happen out of sight, so you might not know for twenty minutes what actually happened.

During any incident, **stay on the phone!** Your mobile worker is responsible for getting information back to you, or to Control (depends on whether you have hand-held radios). The only time you can justify getting off the phone is when your worker has left for an incident above you and stations below you have failed to stop an oncoming car. In that case, you must red-flag it yourself, then report its status to Control. Report the ambulance and wrecker as they pass your station. If many minutes go by without information, report in anyway. Remember, you are Control’s eyes and ears.

The worker on foot must first and always **grab the fire extinguisher**. If hand-held radio and kit containing fire glove and other tools is provided, grab those too. Depending on the location and type of emergency, either wait for Control’s instructions or head to the incident. Stay aware of any vehicles (unstopped competitors, service vehicles) that might be on the hill. If you have been provided with a hand-held radio, wear it all day so you don’t forget it in the heat of the moment. You will need it to report on the incident when you arrive.

How you act upon arrival depends of course on what you find. Sometimes it takes many minutes to reach a site, especially if you have to run uphill carrying a 20-lb fire bottle.

Drivers whose cars have horns are asked to **honk twice if they are O-K and lean on the horn for one long bleat if they need Helllllllllp!** If you hear a horn, relay the information back to the person on the phone.

Fire is a common emergency. All competitors are required to carry a fire bottle or fire system in the car, but it may not be accessible after a crash, or be already used up—hot fluids or hot parts against dried grass and leaves often start fires *outside* the car. We do not want any forest fires! If the fire is under the hood, try to shoot the extinguisher up from under the car. If in the cockpit with driver still inside, spray the driver if you have to. In a worst-case situation, if he can’t get out and you must choose between the driver and yourself, you are obliged to save yourself first.

To use a fire extinguisher, pull the pin, aim at the BASE of the fire, and squeeze the handle, sweeping back and forth.

If possible, **make sure a disabled car is turned off**. In a fire, an active fuel pump can keep the blaze going beyond your control. The fancier race cars will have a “kill switch” on the outside, marked with a lightning bolt, with which you can cut off the juice.

If the driver is still in the car, speak to him calmly and keep him there until the ambulance arrives. If the car is upside-down, make sure the driver understands that before he undoes the belts! Falling onto his head might create an injury where there wasn't one. Best to keep the driver in the car if you can convince him to wait for the ambulance. If the driver is unconscious, do not move him unless he is in immediate danger, such as fire.

More likely, **the driver is already out of the car** and hopping around, swearing or giggling. Either way, make him sit down. The adrenaline jolt that drivers get during a mishap usually makes them unable to feel an injury. Also, when the adrenaline wears off, their knees often give out. Many drivers are more concerned about the car than themselves, and might be extremely upset. Be persistent and calm.

All drivers involved in a hard impact or rollover MUST be seen by the ambulance crew. We are required to have an ambulance at all events and cannot start before it arrives. The ambulance crew will perform any first aid that's needed, unless you arrive first at a freak situation where there's a severe injury requiring immediate attention and you are qualified to give it. Even then, your task is to stabilize and comfort, not treat. The ambulance is seconds to minutes away—it will arrive long before one would in a public-road accident. **Your job is to keep the driver calm, the situation under control, and report back to your checkpoint and thus Control as soon as possible.** If you have a hand-held radio, report as you go.

In some instances an accident will cut the phone line. When that happens, Finish will serve as Control from the break upward, while Control will communicate to checkpoints from the break downward. If you have hand-held radios, there will be a Control on that channel to instruct you.

Disabled cars that are safely off the road will likely be left there until lunch break or end of day, when they can be moved without holding up the event. This is Control's and/or the event chairman's decision.

What You Need

Except for extreme weather conditions, such as electrical storms, snow, or heavy rain (all of which will cancel the event), you will be outdoors for a day, often in the damp shade, not moving. Thus, your clothes will make all the difference in your comfort.

Our season starts in early May and runs through mid-October. You will be in the New England mountains, where the temperature can vary 50 degrees over the course of any day. Mornings are chilly, even in summer. In spring and fall, this can include frost and snow flurries. By midday, it might be balmy and beautiful. In summer, you might broil then get soaked in an afternoon shower. Conversely, your checkpoint could be in a cloud all day and you will chill to the bone in August. So when it comes to clothes, **pack for the season you're in plus the one before and after.** Expect to add and subtract layers for two days, and carry these with you.

Required: Truly waterproof rain gear—including footwear or a change of shoes. CHAIR. Plastic bags (large) to put over equipment and chairs, and for trash (we are required to carry out everything we carry in). Umbrella for rain or sun. Hat and gloves. Sunglasses. Bug spray. Snacks and liquids for the day (free lunch and soda are provided at break, and free beer after the event). NOTE: There are no bathrooms on the mountains, only at the base, so be prepared!

Optional: Camera. Stopwatch (driver's love to get split times). Entertainment, such as a book, in case there's a long delay. Paper and pencil. (Control logs are usually available from a club official to help you keep track of cars during the day.)

Final Note

Hillclimbs are not spectator sports open to the public. We rent the entire hill for the weekend and have exclusive use. Some spectators are allowed, such as photographers, visitors who are potential competitors or workers, and family members—all of whom must register and sign releases. But sometimes curious hikers will materialize out of the woods. If that happens, you are to first stop them then advise Control, who will likely tell you to politely but sternly instruct them to stay away from the road.