

AA Draft 2

Tasmanian Adventure Activity Standard Emergency Planning (Supplementary Folder)

Advice for Organisations, Guides and Leaders



Tasmania
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ADVENTURE ACTIVITY STANDARDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY?.....	3
DEVELOPING A MANAGEMENT PLAN	4
PLAN FRAMEWORK.....	4
WHAT TO INCLUDE.....	5
MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT	6
1.1 <i>Management of Critical Incidents—Urban</i>	<i>6</i>
1.2 <i>Management of Critical Incident—Remote Area.....</i>	<i>6</i>
1.3 <i>Response of the Contact Person</i>	<i>7</i>
1.4 <i>Response of the Operator.....</i>	<i>7</i>
1.5 <i>Emergency Services Protocols in Remote Areas</i>	<i>8</i>
IMPORTANT	8

DRAFT

Tasmanian Adventure Activity Standard – Emergency Planning

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Endorsed by Tasmania’s outdoor recreation and adventure tourism sectors

Supported by the Tasmanian government

The following supplementary information has been provided as part of the Tasmanian Adventure Activity Standards. It is not intended to be comprehensive in content but includes additional background information on key aspects of planning.

INTRODUCTION

Most community groups and commercial organisations will already have some protocols for dealing with the issues raised here, even if they are not actually formalised into a 'plan', but the information may be a useful reference for further reading or more formal planning if deemed necessary.

As part of the risk-management strategy of the organisation, the individual components of a program would have been assessed and risk-management strategies developed for them. However, accidents and emergencies can still occur and are usually sudden and unexpected, significantly affecting groups and individuals within the workplace community. They cause considerable disruption in the short to long term and require immediate and planned responses. An emergency plan details an organisation's response to such a critical incident.

An emergency plan provides a ready reference for managing emergencies and should be designed to assist organisations to respond appropriately to these events and to help the organisation meet its obligations to provide a safe and healthy work environment as required under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY?

An emergency is a sudden event that endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person, or threatens to destroy or damage property. It may include:

a fatality

a serious injury, assault or sexual assault

the disappearance of participant

the collapse or major damage to a building or the equipment

a motor vehicle collision/impact with organisation

an earthquake or other natural event

a fire in the organisation's building or a bushfire

contamination by a hazardous material via fumes, a spill or a leak

an outbreak of disease

floods or a windstorm.

A critical incident can occur in any workplace. Incidents can occur in the office, when participants and employees are on camp, participating in an activity or while they are travelling to or from a program. They are particularly traumatic if they are a violent or horrific event. People who have experienced a critical incident often need counselling and care.

The magnitude of an event does not always determine its impact on the organisation as a whole or the individuals within it. An incident that is trivial for one person may be traumatic for another, particularly where previous experiences remain unresolved. , Large numbers

of people, including participants, staff, clients and the community may be affected by stress and/or grief following an emergency. They may be:

people directly exposed to the incident

close relatives and friends

people who have unresolved grief from other losses in their lives

peers

helpers involved in the recovery process

administrative and clerical staff who have been involved

executive and management people

members of the organisation or workplace community.

DEVELOPING A MANAGEMENT PLAN

Critical incidents require a systemic and planned response. Prior emergency planning helps an organisation to manage an emergency more successfully. It also minimises long-term effects on individuals and organisations, including financial loss and enhances the ability to resume normal functioning.

Many of the short and long-term traumatic effects from an emergency event can be reduced by developing clear emergency procedures and networks prior to the event.

A commercial outdoor activity program provider is particularly vulnerable when faced with an emergency situation. The general operation of the organisation can be severely affected as a result of even fairly minor events. It is therefore very important to consider the community, environment and hazards during the emergency planning process, as this may have implications on the procedures to be put in place (see supplementary folder – **Risk Management**).

Experience has shown that a shared development of emergency management guidelines as part of a workplace's or organisation's planning and decision-making processes, before an emergency occurs, is the ideal approach. It fosters a coordinated and effective response that addresses the needs of individuals and groups within the organisation. Prior clarification of roles, responsibilities and communication channels to operate during an emergency can also assist employees to respond more appropriately.

PLAN FRAMEWORK

A framework provides a simple process that organisations can operate within during and immediately after an emergency or other crisis. Planning must provide for the:

- safety and welfare of participants and employees
- establishment of principles and practices for the coordination of activities
- definition of the roles and responsibilities in:
 - preparation
 - response
 - recovery from an emergency.
- measures that can be taken to prevent or minimise the impact of an emergency

Emergency plans should be as simple as possible.

The greater part of planning should be directed towards more likely threats or incidents, but should take into account any possible threats the organisation might face, even those that seem unlikely.

Developing emergency management processes that enable wide consultation with the organisation's staff are essential to ensure all information that may impact on the emergency response is known and incorporated in the guidelines

The emergency plan should be included with the operations manual and regularly updated.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

The plan might include, depending on the program and operations of the organisation:

- a brief description of the organisation and its programs and process (this may already have been developed as part of an operations manual – see supplementary folder - **Operations Manuals**)
- a list of potential hazards which have been identified (these may have been identified as part of the risk-management process)
- the location and approximate response time of emergency services
- an outline of roles and responsibilities of all those who may be involved
- an outline of the arrangements for alerting emergency services
- an outline of the arrangements for alerting and notifying (employees, participants, parents and carers), including where trip and personal trip details are stored and the role of emergency contacts
- an outline of the arrangements for participants, employees and other persons with disabilities
- an overview of the process for making decisions and communicating them
- an outline of the methods for securing building(s), property, records and books
- an outline of the processes for obtaining resources during an emergency
- the provision and location of first-aid and welfare points
- any alternatives for evacuation routes and assembly areas, including indoor and outdoor options (depending on what activity employees and participants are involved in at the time of an evacuation, a variety of alternatives may be required and rehearsal prior to any emergency is recommended)
- an outline of emergency training needs for employees and participants, including the frequency of briefings and drills
- the means by which the plan will be reviewed, including an Incident reporting process
- any references to state emergency plans.

Note: Accidents

A record of all accidents, no matter how minor, must be kept. Leaders/guides should fill in on-line an incident report form for participants, staff, non-employees and trainees. These are NOT an official incident report but can provide a local record of injury and accidents.

Personal accounts – In all cases, leaders/guides are advised to write a signed, independent report on the accident as soon as possible after the event. Each witnessing leader/guide/adult is advised to prepare their own signed report. Such reports can be included with an incident report form.

In all cases of serious injury or accidents, leaders/guides should refer to the operations manual of the organisation, which should contain details of procedures as well as forms.

MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

A critical incident in outdoor recreation activities may involve serious injury or death, or a person or persons becoming lost or going missing. An excursion leader should be prepared for a situation where help from external agencies (for example, the ambulance service and the police) may not be available immediately and he or she will have to assume total management of the crisis for a lengthy period of time.

The initial reaction of people involved in a crisis is to feel confused, disorganised or shocked. The situation is often made worse when unreasoned attempts are made to solve the crisis. However, a critical incident requires an immediate response that should be carried out calmly. Pre-planning for emergencies can speed-up reaction time, avoid trial-and-error solutions and reduce the amount of time needed to resolve the crisis.

In the event of serious or fatal incidents, the police are responsible for the management of the incident and all other parties (supervisor and contact persons) are under their direction. Only the police may notify parents or next-of-kin of any fatalities.

1.1 Management of Critical Incidents – Urban

In the case of a critical incident in an urban area, the leader's response should be to:

- ensure the physical safety of the group
- limit further injury to the injured (use protective gloves to avoid contact with blood or other body fluids) and administer immediate first-aid
- call an ambulance, notify the police and the organisation/college contact person (if nominated)
- provide emotional and physical support for all members of the group.

The response of the contact person should be to:

- provide immediate physical and emotional support for the leader/guide and participants
- relieve the leader/guide of further decision-making responsibilities as soon as possible
- contact the emergency services immediately if the leader has not already done so.

1.2 Management of Critical Incident – Remote Area

In the case of a critical incident in a remote area, the leader's response should be to:

- Initially:
 - Assess the safety needs of the group and the situation (safety, injury, lost person or condition of the party).

- Make sure everyone is safe and encourage them to remain calm.
- Administer emergency first-aid after prioritising the needs of the injured.
- Identify and use people in the group who can assist in managing the incident.
- Plan as carefully and calmly as possible.
- Maintain the group integrity, but remove the rest of the group from the immediate incident site.
- Search and rescue:
 - Organise a local search, back-tracking as necessary.
 - Do not risk further members becoming lost.
 - Call off the search if there is any further danger to the members of the group.
 - Remove casualties from situations that are potentially life-threatening.
- Serious injury or death:
 - Limit further danger to the injured and administer emergency first-aid.
 - Establish shelter and make the injured as comfortable as possible.
 - In the event of a fatality, cover the body and make sure it cannot be disturbed (for example, by wild animals).
- Further action:
 - Decide whether to get immediate help or to stay put.
 - Establish adequate shelter if required and nurture needs of the people involved.
 - Provide physical/emotional support to the members of the group. Talk about their concerns and alleviate immediate stress, such as denial, rejection, guilt, irrational behaviour and loss of control.
 - Where possible, collect accurate information (written and photographic) about the incident.

1.3 Response of the Contact Person

In an emergency situation, the response of the contact person should be to:

- alert police to the search and rescue situation
- notify the supervisor and club officials, with full details of the trip, search and rescue situation and remain close to telephone.

1.4 Response of the Operator

In an emergency situation, the response of the operator should be to:

- advise parents/next-of-kin of the participants all of the known facts (only the police can notify of any fatalities)
- inform all staff of the situation
- prevent media contact with staff, participants or others involved in the incident
- inform participants at the office of essential details only.

1.5 Emergency Services Protocols in Remote Areas

The following protocol can be used with the police for call-out procedures.

When initiated by the contact person (in event of an overdue party):

- contact police search and rescue
- contact the supervisor/club official who will notify parents and so on.

When initiated by the leader or parent:

- contact the contact person (the contact person will notify the police search and rescue and then the supervisor/club official who will notify parents).

Note:

- The contact person should always remain where he/she can be contacted by the police and must know how to contact the police search and rescue in the area.
- The police shall keep the contact person informed of any developments and he/she will notify the operator.

IMPORTANT

In the case of an accident involving persons, facilities or equipment (including motor vehicles), no verbal or written comment must be made that could be construed by an other party as an admission of liability.

Accident reporting forms must contain an objective account of events only. Interpretation of events, or comments of a personal nature, must not be included on these forms or in any other written records. Furthermore, the forms must not, either directly or indirectly, contain information as to 'who was responsible for the accident' or 'what should be done to avoid future incidents'. Such information could be construed legally as an admission of liability.

All accident reporting forms are obtainable by other parties under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*.

The adventure activity standards listed are based on generally accepted common practice. Their use in each individual activity or program may vary according to previous client experiences, weather and environmental considerations. It is strongly recommended that all providers (commercial and non-commercial) obtain independent legal advice to ensure they understand their duty-of-care obligations under the law in Tasmania.



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