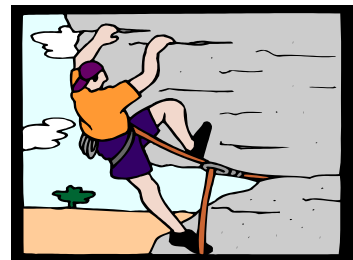
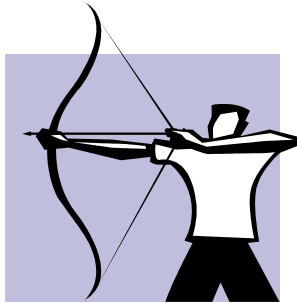




COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

OUTDOOR EDUCATION



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

RISK ASSESSMENT & SAFETY POLICY

UPDATED 2004

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Document

This document is addressed to all those who are responsible for safety and good practice in outdoor education. It covers the aims of outdoor education, principles of safety, management and accountability structure, incident procedures and the role of the instructor/leader.

Cognisance has been taken of the implications and requirements of the health & safety at work legislation, and the Adventure Activities Licensing regulations, particularly where they relate to the management systems necessary to ensure the health and safety of employers and participants in outdoor activities.

This document is therefore intended to represent part of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's response to its responsibilities under the:

- *Health & Safety at Work Act 1974*
- *Activity Centres (Young Person's Safety) Act 1995*
- *Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 and associated regulations. This includes ensuring all reasonable safety precautions are in place for those engaging in outdoor activities under the auspices of Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar.*

In order to achieve this objective it is necessary to consider the issues of safety and risk management within an outdoor activity programme before describing in detail the operating procedures and criteria for safe practice when conducting a session in a particular activity.

These criteria have been kept to an essential minimum to allow trained and experienced persons to make their own judgements in particular situations and because it is impossible to cover every aspect of an unexpected situation.

Instructor guidelines are also included. These are intended to assist the instructor in enhancing the safety of participants in his or her charge whilst responding to both the needs of the participants and to variables outwith the instructor's control.

This document emphasises the responsibility incumbent upon an instructor. No apology is made for this as the role of an instructor does place a great responsibility on the individual. However the Council does bear responsibility for the actions of the instructional staff. In meeting its responsibilities the Council will make provision for suitable and safe equipment to be available, and for instructors to receive necessary training.

The primary concern is for the welfare of participants, hence whilst the principals of safety remain unchanged, there are situations where the detailed criteria and

guidelines should be re-evaluated or modified, in order to meet the specific needs of a particular group.

It is recognised that the key to safe practice in outdoor activities is the training and competence of individual members of staff. This competence may be demonstrated through the holding of national governing body qualification or through the Council's internal training and assessment policy.

This document is therefore intended as a framework within which instructors may exercise their competence and facilitate the safety enjoyment and learning of participants.

AIMS OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Outdoor education is now seen within the profession as drawing upon three main areas – environmental education, and social and personal development. Moray House Institution of education.

The aims of outdoor education in the Western Isles are:

- To promote the theme of living and working together through a range of activities which provide adventure, challenge and enjoyment.
- To provide opportunities for individuals to learn new skills which will enhance their personal, social, intellectual and moral development.
- To actively strive to develop and promote a wider awareness of the environment, environmental issues and the impact of outdoor activities on the natural environment.

PRINCIPLES OF SAFETY

Challenge and adventure are never free of risk. Learning to have regard for the safety of oneself and for others is an aspect of the personal development of participants to which outdoor education can make a valuable contribution. However, there must always be an acceptable framework of safety.

Inherent in challenge and adventure is an element of risk. It is recognised that all reasonable precautions should be taken to reduce the element of risk without an activity becoming so boring as to devalue it completely.

The adventure 'must be real', but the risk must be negligible.

Instructors' concern for the safety of participants covers psychological and emotional, as well as physical safety.

The key elements upon which the principals of safety are based:

- Risk Assessment
- Adequate Supervision
- Effective Communication
- Planning and Preparation
- Evaluation

Risk Assessment

- All potential hazards and risks are identified. Prior knowledge of the intended location is an essential part of the planning process.
- Relate the hazard risk to the participant group and to the prevailing objective conditions (e.g. weather).
- Determining the risk i.e. the likelihood of a hazard causing harm.
- Managing the activity so that the risk is controlled.

Complete elimination of risk is not possible and perhaps not desirable and therefore guarantees of safety cannot be given, but assurances can be given that all reasonable care and sensible preparatory arrangements have been taken.

Adequate Supervision

Safe practice is an attitude of mind. It is a blend of confidence, competence and adaptability in the handling of potential dangers without causing unnecessary risks of physical or psychological harm. It follows therefore, that there are two principle strands in ensuring safe practice within an outdoor activity programme.

Firstly that instructional staff are trained and are competent in both the technical and in the social and leadership skills required.

Secondly, that a framework is in place within which instructional staff competences can be identified, and a framework or organisational practice and procedure within which the instructors can exercise sound judgement to meet the needs of their activity participants whilst fulfilling their responsibilities to the Council.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is critical to all aspects of safe practice between the management and the instructors, and between the instructors and activity participants. Strategies must be in place to ensure communication takes place effectively.

Planning and Preparation

All aspects of the proposed activity should be carefully planned.

Evaluation

It is important to evaluate the outcomes of a particular event in order to learn from the experience. The evaluation process must be a constant and continual process in order to contribute to and inform the planning for all future programmes.

STATEMENT OF SAFETY POLICY

In relation to outdoor activities

In accordance with the requirements of the 'Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974', the following statement of Safety Policy is published.

1. It is the policy of the Council to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees and participants whilst using the facilities of the Council including when under instruction.
2. Within this general policy the Council will endeavour, as far as it is reasonably practicable:-
 - a) To provide and maintain equipment and systems of work that are safe and free from risks to health. In particular to regularly inspect, test and record the condition of ropes. Abseil/climbing equipment and buoyancy aids.
 - b) To provide such information, instructions training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of its employees and students, through establishment of training plans, regular job reviews with instructors, staff meetings and assessment of instructor competence.
 - c) To maintain each place of work and access to and egress from it in a condition that is safe and without risk to health commensurate with the undertaking of adventure activities. To maintain this through staff meetings and ongoing risk assessment.
 - d) To provide such protective clothing and equipment as is necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of employees and students. Through the maintenance of the equipment inventory and annual budget allowance to ensure that worn and damaged equipment is replaced.
3. Competent technical advice on safety and health matters will be provided where this is necessary and regular audits of safe working practice will be conducted, through staff training, staff meetings and the work of the relevant supervisors.
4. All employees and participants are reminded of their own duties and obligations under Health and Safety Legislation:

"It shall be the duty of every employee and participant;

 - a) To take reasonable care for the health and safety for himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work;

- b) And as regards any duty or requirement imposed on his employer or any other person by, or under any of the relevant statutory provisions, to co-operate with him so far as is necessary to enable that duty or requirement to be performed or complied with."

5. Risk Assessment

There is a danger of believing that absolute safety can be guaranteed. Whilst risk assessments and risk management can increase the safety margin in outdoor activities there is no sense in which a risk assessment can be regarded as complete.

This is true of an assessment of potential psychological danger as well as physical danger.

Risk assessment is an ongoing process and the undertaking and communicating of that assessment is the responsibility of each instructor. Strategies are in place in each centre whereby the result of risk assessments can be disseminated in the instructional team and appropriate action taken. (Instructors meetings, risk books etc.).

For each activity an initial risk assessment has been made, the results recorded and incorporated in the relevant standard operating procedures. This risk assessment is intended to establish the criteria for safe practice. Ongoing risk assessments will use a proforma which lead the assessor to consider a risk identification, risk management strategy and a "what if?" component.

6. Equipment

All outdoor activity equipment will meet the national and international standards.

Life Jackets: BS 3595 (CEN 100N or 150N) EC Standard

Buoyancy aids: BCU/BACT Standard BA 83 (CEN 50N)

Helmets - Watersports - of a design recommended by the BCU
- Mountain activity - UI AGM Standards
- Ropes/Climbing equipment - UI AGM

All of the equipment is checked for damage regularly, and the performance tested where relevant. The results of tests will be recorded in a log book.

A log book is kept of abseil rope usage.

Provision of equipment will be made to instructors in compliance with the Personal protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, and to students as a response to the Trust's duty of care and duties to others under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

7. Training Development and Assessment of Staff

Training will take place thus:

- Initial job training
- Due to changed circumstances
- Refresher training

It will include the need for instructors to undertake and communicate ongoing risk assessments.

Training reviews and training need analyses will place throughout the year and specifically during each employees annual performance review.

Where they are available, the coaching/leadership qualifications of the national governing bodies (NGB's) will be the focus of training activity.

Where NGB qualifications are not available or appropriate, in House Training and Assessment will be implemented to verify an instructor's suitability to deliver particular activity sessions.

Central records are kept of each instructor's qualifications to instruct a particular activity. These are readily available to enquirers.

8. Equal Opportunities

In line with the Councils equal opportunities statement activity programmes and safety precautions will be adapted, where necessary and possible, to ensure they are accessible to all students irrespective of disability or gender.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The Emergency Procedure for all activities is shown on the following flow chart but can be summarised:-

- a) Administer first aid to casualty and ensure safety of the remainder of the group.
- b) Seek aid and evacuation where appropriate
- c) Report to Council Emergency Centre if necessary.





OPERATION OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS.

For level 1 and 2 emergencies, Instructor/Party Leader will respond by:- Attending to injured, ensuring Safety of rest of group.

For level 3 & 4 emergencies, Instructor/Party Leader will respond by attending to injured and ensuring safety of rest of group, summoning help/evacuation contacting Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar 24 Hours Emergency Centre, Tel 01851 701702.

Council Emergency Centre will then implement the action in the event of a serious incident procedure.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE FLOW CHART

<p>MISFORTUNES MINOR 'ACCIDENTS' REQUIRING SOME ATTENTION FROM PARTY LEADER. NO MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED SLIGHTLY DELAYED RETURN TO BASE.</p>		<p>LEVEL 1.</p> <p>Party Leader responds. Complete accident report form and log book.</p>
<p>MINOR EVENTS INJURIES MINOR BUT REQUIRE MEDICAL ATTENTION ON RETURN. PARTY STILL ABLE TO EXTRACT ITSELF AND RETURN TO BASE WITHOUT OUTSIDE HELP. SIGNIFICANTLY DELAYED RETURN.</p>		<p>LEVEL 2</p> <p>Party Leader responds. Contact Emergency Centre if required. Complete Accident Report form and log book.</p>
<p>SERIOUS EVENTS INJURIES SIGNIFICANT BUT NOT LIFE-THREATENING. PART OF ALL OF THE PARTY REQUIRES TO BE 'RESCUED'.</p>		<p>LEVEL 3</p> <p>Party Leader responds. Party Leader summons Help. Contact Emergency Centre.</p>
<p>FATAL OR NEAR FATAL EVENTS</p>		<p>LEVEL 4</p> <p>Party Leader responds. Party Leader summons help. Contact Emergency Centre.</p>

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN INSTRUCTOR STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES.

1. PREPARATION AND PLANNING

- a) Knowledge of the activity. Instructors should be familiar with the recommendations of the governing bodies and should join the training bodies of their sport where appropriate. Be familiar with the relevant text books and instructors manuals for each activity.
- b) Knowledge of the group – age, numbers, leaders, ability, health problems, experience, fitness, etc.
- c) Knowledge of weather forecast where applicable.
- d) Knowledge of locality – alternative venues.
- e) Plan equipment requirements of the group and ensure that everything is available.

2. COMMUNICATION

- a) Ensure that the group is properly briefed.
- b) Students understanding of briefings and instructions should be checked frequently.
- c) Ensure that potential dangers are explained before they are encountered.
- d) Ensure that the Centre is kept informed of any departure from the programme.

3. INSTRUCTION AND TEACHING

- a) Ensure the safety of the group. This is the priority.
- b) Be prepared to adjust the session content as appropriate to the needs of the participants.
- c) Ensure that the group is adequately prepared.
- d) Be aware of needs (e.g. warmth, morale, toilet, etc.)
- e) Most programmes aim for maximum interest and enjoyment. Use imagination and look for ways of introducing fun. Safety precautions

must not be relaxed. Boredom breeds lack of attention to advice and to personal safety. Interest should therefore be maintained.

- f) Be enthusiastic, dynamic and flexible in your approach. Lead by example and by becoming involved with participants in each activity.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (GENERAL)

1. The Standard Operating Procedures (General), together with the Standard Operating Procedures (Activity Specific), form part of the Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar safe practice at work statements.
2. The instructor will be trained, assessed and deemed competent before leading an activity session.
3. Sessions should be concerned with the development of skills and outcomes, but must primarily be safe and enjoyable.
4. Responsibility of safety during an activity session lies with the instructor designated to conduct the activity.

The responsibility for individual participants remains with the visiting teacher or group leader who are obliged to withdraw them from an activity if they become concerned for the safety of their charges.

5. Instructors have authority to alter the duration or location of any activity, within site specific parameters, if, in their judgement, it becomes necessary to do so.
6. Instructors are responsible for ensuring that equipment is not abused. Damage, breakage or loss must be noted and reported as soon as practicable.

Equipment

- a) Instructors will be prepared for every reasonable eventuality.
 - b) Careful checks on the condition of equipment should be made at start of session and on return. Instructors are responsible for ensuring that equipment is cleaned, dried and stored away after use.
 - c) Advice and example will be given on equipment use, care and transport, to develop in participants a respect of equipment.
 - d) Instructors should be prepared and able to offer advice on equipment and other aspects of the sport.
7. Instructors carry the responsibility for ensuring that nothing they or their participants do or say brings Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar into disrepute. They are responsible for maintaining high professional and ethical standards.
 8. Instructors should accept responsibility for the continuing risk assessments and development of quality and good practice through feedback to management.

9. Instructors are expected to be aware of growing concerns relating to health matters, (e.g. Weils Disease, Lyme's Disease & E-Coli) and should take appropriate steps to protect and advise participants.
10. Instructors are expected to be fully conversant with and adhere strictly to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar guidelines in relation to child protection policy and guidelines.
11. Before and during a particular activity session and not withstanding previous risk assessments, the instructor will analyse the activity on a basis of safety.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (ACTIVITY SPECIFIC)

PRINCIPLES OF ACTIVITY STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

For every activity the principles for the instructors to ensure the safety, enjoyment and learning of participants are the same.

- 1 Brief group carefully on the activity session ensuring they know what will be expected of them and what they can expect of the instructor.
- 2 Equipment – issue and check.
- 3 Conduct the session with attention to safety, group involvement, discipline and minimal environmental impact.
- 4 Close session:
 - a) Collect, check and return equipment
 - b) Debrief and reflect on activity with group.
- 5 Instructor training and assessment to be competent is based on the standard operating procedures.
- 6 Instructors are required to operate within the standard operating procedures. Failure to do so will be a matter for disciplinary action.

ARCHERY

Risks

- 1 BEING HIT BY AN ARROW
- 2 INJURY FROM WALKING INTO A GROUNDED OR TARGETED ARROW
- 3 INJURY FROM A TARGETED ARROW BEING PULLED OUT OF THE TARGET
- 4 INJURY FROM MISFIRING THE BOW

Risk Management: Essential Criteria

Risk(s)

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| All | a) | Instructors will be trained and assessed to be competent in accordance with the Scottish Archery Association. |
| All | b) | The activity will be run to Grand National Archery Society Standards. |
| All | c) | Instructor: Student ratio will not exceed 1:8. |
| All | d) | Safety procedures and risk disclosure will be included in the student briefing. |
| 1 | e) | Nobody will cross the clearly defined shooting line while firing is in progress. |
| 1 | f) | The start of firing will be indicated by one whistle blast and collection of arrows by two whistle blasts. |
| 1 | g) | The emergency shout 'STOP' shall be used to stop all activity immediately. |
| 4 | h) | Student's bows and arrows will be carefully matched to their size. |
| 14 | i) | A bow and arrow will never be drawn and aimed at anything other than the target. |

Instructor's Guidelines

1. The instructor will string the bows.
2. Bows will not be drawn and released without an arrow in place.
3. Instructors will ensure the correct technique is taught when shooting and removing arrows from the target.

4. Instructors will make sure that all equipment is up to standard and that arm protectors and tabs are available at all time.

KAYAKING

Risks

- 1 DROWNING AND WATER INHALATION;
- 2 CAPSIZE AND SUDDEN IMMERSION IN COLD WATER;
- 3 HYPOTHERMIA
- 4 HEAD INJURIES
- 5 MINOR CUTS, SPRAINS AND BRUISES

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| All | a) | Instructors will hold the appropriate SCA/BCU Awards; |
| All | b) | Safety procedures will be included in the pre-activity briefing; |
| All | c) | The ratio of instructors to students is 1:8 if one instructor is present. This may be increased to 1:12 with two instructors. Caution and sound judgement must be exercised in relation to ratios, dependent on weather, tide and any offshore wind. |
| 1 | d) | The instructor is responsible for determining that all participants can swim 25 metres in kayaking clothing. Non-swimmers may participate at the discretion of a senior instructor or his designee. |
| 1 | e) | All participants must wear buoyancy aids and footwear. |
| 1,2,3 | f) | Discipline of the group should be such that canoeists do not get spread out, away from the instructor. |
| 4 | g) | Helmets will be worn by all canoeists at the discretion of a senior instructor or his designee. |

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

1. Instructor will check weather forecast and tidal information. In the event of an offshore wind, extreme caution and sound judgement must be exercised.
2. Instructors should be first in and last out of water.
3. Instructors should carry or have direct access to first aid kit, tow line, survival bay, spare clothing, hot drink and repair kit.
4. Boats must be checked for buoyancy. All equipment must be checked and all defects reported.

POWER BOAT/RUBBER TUBING

RISKS

- 1 FALLING OVERBOARD, SUDDEN COLD WATER IMMERSION;
- 2 INJURY FROM BOAT/PROPELLER;
- 3 HYPOTHERMIA;
- 4 DROWNING;
- 5 ENGINE FAILURE;
- 6 INJURY BY BEING THROWN FROM RUBBER TUBE

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- All a) Craft will be manned by staff holding the appropriate RYA qualification;
- 1,2,3,4, b) Safety procedures will be included in the participants' briefing;
- 1 c) Ratio – 1 Coxswain: 6 passengers should not normally be exceeded.
- 1 d) Boat should be fitted with an isolation switch and killcord which should be used in accordance with RYA safety procedures.
- 1, 4 e) All passengers and crew must wear buoyancy aids.
- 2,3,4,5 f) Safety equipment carried in boat must be checked and on board:
 - Paddles* *Anchor, Chain & Wrap*
 - VHF Radio* *Tool Kit*
 - Survival Bag* *First Aid Kit*
 - Knife* *Flares – orange smoke and pin point red*
 - Inflation Pump* *Bailer & Bailing Pump*
 - Spare Fuel Container* *Dry Clothing*
 - Hot Drink* *Fire Extinguisher*

Additional Criteria for Rubber Tubing

- 6 g) When towing tube, extreme caution must be exercised with regard to boat speed. Speed/power must be reduced when turning (pendulum effect)
- 6 h) When towing tube, S-turns should be used, not tight 360° turns.
- 6 i) Good lookout must be maintained at all times.

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

1. Check weather forecast and tidal information and appropriate charts.
2. Check boat, engines and equipment before and after session. Flares, radios anchor chain and warp must not be left on boat. Return to Centre after use.
3. It is the responsibility of the Coxswain to ensure that boat is moored securely at end of session.
4. All equipment must be checked and all defects reported.

SWIMMING : SEA

RISKS

- 1 DROWNING;
- 2 CRAMPS;
- 3 HYPOTHERMIA;
- 4 SCRAPES, ETC ON ROCKS

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- All a) The instructor must be confident that they can ensure a rescue if a swimmer gets into difficulty. The Instructor must hold an appropriate Lifesaving or Water Safety & Rescue award.
- All b) Safety procedures to be included in the pre-activity briefing;
- 1,2, 3 c) Area should be free from strong tides or currents, rip-currents or under tows.
- 1,2,3,4 d) Only allow jumping or diving in clear water where there is enough depth.
- 1,2,3,4 e) Limits to the area within which swimmers can move must be clearly laid down.

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

- 1. Instructors supervising must be clothed appropriately and be prepared to enter the water in the event of an emergency.
- 2. Except in the event of an emergency, the instructor will not enter the water and then only as a last resort.
- 3. Instructors should carry or have direct access to throw bag/line, first aid kit, spare clothing, survival bag, hot drink.
- 4. Instructors should stress and encourage responsible behaviour by all participants.

PIER JUMPING

RISKS

- 1 DROWNING;
- 2 CRAMPS;
- 3 HYPOTHERMIA;
- 4 SCRAPES, ETC ON ROCKS
- 5 FALLS FROM HEIGHT
- 6 JUMPING AND LANDING ON OTHERS

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- | | | |
|---------|----|--|
| All | a) | The instructor must be confident that they can ensure a rescue if a swimmer gets into difficulty. The Instructor must hold an appropriate Lifesaving or Water Safety & Rescue award. |
| All | b) | Safety procedures to be included in the pre-activity briefing; |
| 1,2,3 | c) | Area should be free from strong tides or currents, rip-currents or undertows. |
| 1,2,3,4 | d) | Only allow jumping or diving in clear water where there is enough depth. |
| 1,2,3,4 | e) | Limits to the area within which swimmers can move must be clearly laid down. |
| 5,6 | f) | Limit number of persons at edge of pier. |
| 5,6 | g) | Jump into water only when told to do so by Instructor. |

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

1. Instructors supervising must be clothed appropriately and be prepared to enter the water in the event of an emergency.
2. Except in the event of an emergency, the instructor will not enter the water and then only as a last resort.
3. Instructors should carry or have direct access to throw bag/line, first aid kit, spare clothing, survival bag, hot drink.
4. Instructors should stress and encourage responsible behaviour by all participants.

ABSEILING

RISKS

- 1 INJURY DUE TO FALL FROM THE CRAG;
- 2 EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS FAILURE;
- 3 MINOR INJURY DUE TO SCRAPES AND BUMS ON ROCK DURING ABSEIL;
- 4 HYPOTHERMIA;
- 5 INJURY DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES (E.G. SPRAINS ON ROUGH GROUND, STONEFALL);

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- | | | |
|--------|----|--|
| All | a) | Abseiling instructors will hold a relevant qualification or equivalent – SPA (Single Pitch Award), MIA (Mountaineering Instructors Award) or Site Specific training and assessment provided by an MIA or MIC holder. |
| 2 | b) | Appropriate technical equipment will be used and logged for use. |
| 1,4,5 | c) | There will be an appropriate supervision of students around the crag. |
| 1,3,5, | d) | Helmets (UIAA Approved) must be worn by students, supervisors and instructors below the crag, approaching and during the abseil. |
| All | e) | Safety procedures and risk disclosure will be included in the students briefing. |
| All | f) | The abseiling instructor will be competent in areas such as first aid, accident and emergency procedures, clothing and equipment, knowledge of weather, to be able to cope with any incident or accident. |

ABSEIL INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

Abseil instructors must follow procedures according to qualifications, training and Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar guidelines with particular regard to:

1. Select the best site according to weather forecast and safe access.
2. Check that all students and supervisors are suitably clothed and equipped.
3. All technical equipment must be logged in/out of stores, checked for damage before and after use and any defects reported. Return all equipment to the centre after the session.

4. There must be a minimum of one supervisor at the top and one supervisor at the bottom of the crag (plus the instructor) during abseil sessions.
5. Instructors will have an appropriate and valid first aid certificate.
6. Instructors should have sufficient knowledge, sympathy and interest in the island environment and social history to provide a stimulating and interesting session.

HILL WALKING AND GENERAL LOW LEVEL WALKS

Risks

- 1 BECOMING LOST;
- 2 INJURY DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES;
- 3 EXHAUSTION AND HYPOTHERMIA

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| All | a) | Walking leaders will hold the relevant qualification or equivalent - SMLTB (Summer Mountain Leader Award), BETA (Basic Expedition Training Award), or Area Specific training and assessment provided by an MIA or MIC holder. |
| All | b) | Leader: Student ratio will not exceed 1:8 on rough hill group appropriate to the remit of ML. On general low level walks, (including navigation exercises), appropriate to the remit of the BETA, the ration will not exceed 1:12 plus the use of a supervisor (e.g. a teacher with school groups). |
| All | c) | Safety procedures and risk disclosure will be included in the students briefing. |
| 1,3 | d) | The Leader will be competent in the use of map and compass and be capable of navigating in bad weather conditions to the extent that he/she will never be seriously lost and/or exhaust his/her party in finding an objective. |
| 1 | e) | A relevant route card will be left at the Centre detailing the planned expedition and including details of the members in the group. |
| 2,3 | f) | The walking leader will be competent in areas such as first aid, accident and emergency procedures, camp craft, clothing and equipment, knowledge of weather, to be able to cope with any incident or accident. |

WALKING LEADER'S GUIDELINES

Walking leaders must follow procedures according to qualifications, training and Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar guidelines with particular regard to:

1. Check that all students and supervisors are suitably clothed and equipped appropriate to the expedition and weather conditions.

2. Navigation exercises will be low level and have a supervisor in the field.
3. Leaders will have an appropriate and valid first aid certificate.
4. When planning a walk, leaders must be aware of access restrictions at certain times in the year and seek advice and permission as necessary.
5. Leaders should have sufficient knowledge, sympathy and interest in the island environment and social history to provide a stimulating and interesting walk.

ROCK SPORTS

Risks

- 1 INJURY DUE TO FALL FROM THE CRAG;
- 2 EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS FAILURE;
- 3 MINOR INJURY DUE TO SCRAPES AND BUMPS ON ROCK DURING CLIMBING;
- 4 HYPOTHERMIA;
- 5 INJURY DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES (E.G. SPRAINS ON ROUGH GROUND, STONEFALL);

Risk(s) RISK MANAGEMENT: ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

- | | | |
|-------|----|--|
| All | a) | Rock Sports instructors will hold a relevant qualification or equivalent – SPA (Single Pitch Award), MIA (Mountaineering Instructors Award) or Site Specific training and assessment provided by an MIA or MIC Holder. |
| 2 | b) | Appropriate technical equipment will be used and logged for use. |
| 1,4,5 | c) | There will be an appropriate supervision of students around the crag. |
| 1,3,5 | d) | Helmets (UIAA Approved) must be worn by students, supervisors and instructors below the crag, approaching and during climbing. |
| All | e) | Safety procedures and risk disclosure will be included in the students briefing. |
| All | f) | The rock sports instructor will be competent in areas such as first aid, accident and emergency procedures, clothing and equipment, knowledge of weather, to be able to cope with any incident or accident. |

ROCK SPORTS INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES

Rock Sports instructors must follow procedures according to qualifications, training and Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar guidelines with particular regard to:

1. Rock climbing will be either top roping or bottom roping sessions only.
2. Select the best site according to weather forecast and safe access.
3. Check that all students and supervisors are suitably clothed and equipped.

4. All technical equipment must be logged in/out of stores, checked for damage before and after use and any defects reported. Return all equipment to the centre after the session.
5. There must be a minimum of one supervisor at the top and one supervisor at the bottom of the crag (plus the instructor) during rock climbing sessions.
6. Instructors should have sufficient knowledge, sympathy and interest in the island environment and social history to provide a stimulating and interesting session.

ROCK CLIMBING GENERAL GUIDELINES

To be read in conjunction with the rock climbing guidelines in the WIC Standard Operating Procedures for Outdoor Activities.

- Sign out and check the rock climbing equipment.
- Have the climbs prepared before the students arrive. Consult the appropriate systems diagram and explanations if necessary.
- Be aware of personal safety whilst working close to the edge of the crag when preparing the climbs.
- Access to upper sites at Berie is via the 'steps' in the lower tier of rock situated to the left of the lower abseil site and then through the gate in the fence to easy wide grass terraces leading to the sites.
- Rock climbing sessions will be bottom roping involving two instructors, or one instructor and an appropriately experienced assistant.
- Check all in situ anchors before each session.
- Use 11 mm static ropes to link and extend anchors to just over the edge of the crag and use rope protectors on the edge as necessary.
- Use 11 mm dynamic half ropes (25m) for the climbing ropes.
- **The Belay Station**
 - (1) For the inexperienced students, minimum of 3 to a climb; 1 climbing, 1 belaying and 1 holding the dead rope below the belay place.
 - (2) For the experienced students, minimum of 2 to a climb; 1 climbing and 1 belaying.
 - (3) Climbers to be lowered down. No students should be at the top of the crag.
 - (4) Before climber starts climbing or before being lowered, the belay must be checked and initially supervised by the instructor.
 - (5) Climbers are lowered off when they touch the top of the crag – screwgate on the anchor to be no lower on climber than waistbelt at time of lowering.
 - (6) Each belay station will have hanging in place an HMS screwgate karabiner clipped into a fig.8 on a bight on the end of the rope (tied off) and an ATC belay device with HMS screwgate karabiner hanging in the belay rope. Not to be removed.
 - (7) Tidy away the spare end of the climbing rope so as it is not trampled on.
 - (8) Clip the HMS screwgates of both the climber and belayer into harness through the waist belt and leg loops.

- **Group Arrival**

- (1) Brief the group on the organisation and supervision around the site.
 - (2) Fit the helmets and harnesses (and rock shoes) and check for security. Fit your own as a demonstration.
 - (3) Demonstrate the use of the belay device, climbing and lowering and explain how the system works.
 - (4) Tuck away 'loose bits' around the belayer's belay device.
 - (5) Use old bits of carpet to allow footwear to be cleaned and dried before setting off on the climb.
 - (6) Explain how rock climbing and abseiling fits into the wider picture of mountaineering and the extent of rock climbing as a recreational activity in the Western Isles.
 - (7) Remember that the climbs will be more difficult in the wet. Add at least one grade.
- On leaving the climbing site, generally try to leave it in a better state than when you arrived. Pick up litter, check for clothing and equipment left behind. Check for damage to the rock climbing equipment as you dismantle the systems.
 - Sign in equipment to stores and log for use and record any damage. Wash, clean and dry off any dirty ropes and other equipment. Replace damaged equipment as necessary.

Free Abseil - Berie; Further Guidelines

These are further to the standard abseiling guidelines as in the WIC Standard Operating Procedures for Outdoor Activities.

- This is an 'advanced' abseil and is appropriate for students who have had a previous abseil session.
- Instructors will select the abseil and safety ropes according to the experience and build of the students.
- The students may abseil without a safety rope if in the judgement of the instructor this is appropriate. The student may be self protected with a prussic loop or may be protected and descent controlled by an instructor holding the end of the abseil rope.
- Students must wear gloves whilst abseiling.

NATIONAL ROCK CLIMBING GRADING SYSTEM

- EASY
- MODERATE (Mod)
- DIFFICULT (Diff)
- VERY DIFFICULT (V Diff)
- MILD SEVERE (M Severe)
- SEVERE (Severe)
- HARD SEVERE (H Severe)
- MILD VERY SEVERE (MVS)
- VERY SEVERE (VS)
- HARD VERY SEVERE (HVS)
- EXTREMELY SEVERE (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5.....)

The above grades are classified as 'overall' descriptive grades taking into account both the technical difficulty and the nature of the route. The 'nature' of the climb includes its length, commitment, availability of good protection, security of the rock, sustained nature or not of the climbing, exposure etc.

Alongside the overall grade of the whole route, the climb is given pitch technical grades i.e. the grade of the hardest (crux) move of the pitch. These technical grades are numerical and start at 4. A technical grade is given for the crux move for each pitch on a long multi pitch climb. Both gradings are open ended.

4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6a, 6b, 6c, 7a

All things being equal, the overall grade has an equivalent expected technical grade. They are:

- Severe 4a
- H Severe/MVS 4b
- VS 4c
- HVS 5a
- E1 5b
- E2 5C
- E3 6a
- E4 6b
- E5 6c

Routes with technical grade lower than the expected will be sustained, very strenuous or poorly protected e.g. VS 4b or E1 5a. Conversely, routes with technical grades higher than the expected norm will have a short and/or generally well protected crux section e.g. VS 5a or E1 5c.

The current hardest climbs in the country to date are in the region of E9/10 7a/b!

HYPOTHERMIA (EXPOSURE AND WATER-IMMERSION)

In normal conditions, the body maintains a balance between the heat generated by movement and other processes and the heat lost from its surface to ensure that the core temperature remains virtually constant at approximately 37°C. When the loss of heat exceeds the body's ability to generate replacement heat then the core temperature will fall.

Hypothermia occurs when the core temperature is significantly lowered. In the outdoors this may be by either progressive heat loss by exposure to the elements or more rapidly by immersion in cold water.

Leaders of educational parties out of doors must take account of the potential for individuals to become hypothermic. This can happen in almost all situations and leaders should be aware of warnings and how to respond.

Inadequate planning is 'the most common cause of hypothermia'.

Staff must take full account of their training both in first aid in a particular activity.

MILD AND PROFOUND HYPOTHERMIA

In the early stages of heat loss the condition is regarded as Mild Hypothermia and if recognised and promptly dealt with may generally be treated within the resources of the party.

If however heat loss progresses and the core temperature continues to fall then **Profound Hypothermia** ensues. The condition of the individual is then considerably more serious requiring considerable care in evacuation and rewarming in hospital.

The transition between these two states occurs at around 32°C, and is mostly easily distinguished by the loss of the **shivering reflex**, i.e. a person who is cold but above this temperature will shiver whereas someone below this temperature will have stopped shivering (whilst getting colder).

CAUSES OF HYPOTHERMIA

Exposure to 'adverse' climatic conditions, including low air temperature, wind and rain or snow.

The combination of **cold + wind + wet** is particularly dangerous.

Immersion in cold water.

In all cases there are other factors that predispose the individual or party for hypothermia

fatigue and anxiety

illness or injury

lack of, or inappropriate food

inadequate clothing or equipment

Ultimately, the energy available to the body comes from food. It is important to ensure that all members of a group have an adequate diet both immediately before and during the expedition or activity.

PREVENTION OF HYPOTHERMIA

Before setting out

Ensure that:

The event is properly planned in all aspects including obtaining the weather forecast.

The proposed activity is within the capabilities of all members of the party.

All members have eaten suitably prior to activity and have adequate food for the day, and spare food when advised.

The clothing of the party is appropriate, particularly in terms of warmth and wind and waterproofness.

Equipment to deal with the unexpected and spare clothing is carried or readily available.

During the Activity

Clothing should be used correctly. In fine weather, wind and waterproof garments should be carried rather than worn. On halting, sufficient warm clothing should be put on to conserve heat.

'Snack breaks' should be frequent.

A careful watch should be kept for early signs of hypothermia. In potentially dangerous conditions, the 'buddy' system should be used, in which students are paired off.

SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA

The symptoms of developing hypothermia can vary considerably, but the following are typical indications:

Physical lethargy, lack of enthusiasm, slowing pace, not responding to directions.

Slow thinking; failure to respond to and understand questions, unable to perform familiar tasks.

Uncharacteristic behaviour, doing quite unreasonable things, becoming aggressive or exhibiting sudden outbursts of energy.

Loss of faculties; speech may be slurred, vision disturbed, co-ordination may fall causing stumbling and falling.

Fits of shivering.

Loss of consciousness.

TREATMENT OF HYPOTHERMIA

Mild Hypothermia

In all cases the essential priority is to prevent any further heat loss from the body, recognising the need to consider the whole party as well as the individual who has succumbed.

When mild hypothermia is recognised at a sufficiently early stage it should be prevented from developing into profound hypothermia by immediate action.

Shelter, extra clothing, food and rest.

From the days plan the easiest return to base will be identified.

Profound Hypothermia

If profound hypothermia is suspected the individual must be treated with great care. Evacuation is generally beyond the resources of the party, rewarming will normally only be undertaken only at fully equipped hospitals.

The person should be insulated as well as possible and shelter created around them. They should not be moved, even after apparent recovery. The person must be kept at rest until a rescue operation can be organised.

If the person is conscious, easily digestible food and warm drinks may be given.

Unconscious casualties should be placed in the 'recovery position' with head slightly lower than the body and the airway maintained.

(Someone other than FULLY conscious must be classed as not conscious i.e. unconscious).

External or 'artificial' warming (hot water bottles, alcohol etc.) should not be attempted.

While awaiting evacuation 'treatment' should be extended to the whole party to prevent further casualties.

WEIL'S DISEASE

What is Weil's Disease?

Weil's Disease (leptospirosis) is a bacterial infection carried in rats' urine, which contaminates water and banks of canals, ponds, rivers and ditches. The risk of infection is especially high in slow moving rivers or stagnant water.

The disease is spread to humans when broken skin or mucous membranes come into contact with water or mud contaminated by rat urine.

People at Risk

The people most at risk are those exposed to contaminated water or river banks due to occupation or leisure interests. These include practical conservation projects on slow moving water and habitat surveys on river banks as well as canoeing, sailing, water skiing and other water sports.

How serious is it?

The disease is serious and needs hospital treatment. The illness can quickly lead to kidney or liver failure, which could be fatal. Recent statistics show that although Weil's Disease is very rare, one infected person in nineteen will die.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms start 3 to 19 days after exposure to the contaminated water. The early symptoms are similar to 'flu' with aching joints, raised temperature and muscle pains, especially in the calf muscles. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor immediately, advising him or her of your possible exposure to the Weil's Disease bacteria. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential for recovery from the illness.

How to avoid infection

DO

Cover the waterproof plasters or gloves, all scratches, cuts, sores and skin affected by eczema etc..

Wash your hands before you eat.
Always Wash and shower after any water sports or conservation work.

Avoid capsizing in canoes etc. but if necessary use a mask or nose clip.

Always wash or shower afterwards.

See your doctor if you fell unwell following involvement in water sports or conservation work.

DON'T

Put wet fishing lines ropes or other objects in your mouth.

Go in or near water without wearing footwear.

Pick up or touch dead animals, especially rats without wearing gloves.

Leave food bait or ground bait on river banks. Please take your rubbish home.

LYME'S DISEASE

What is Lyme's Disease?

Lyme's Disease is caused by infection from a sheep tick which carries the bacillus borrelia burgdoreen. Only a small proportion of ticks actually carry the disease.

People at Risk

The people most at risk are those who spend time in grassland/moorland where sheep or deer have been present.

How serious is it?

It is a serious illness and if left untreated, people with the infection are at risk of late complications.

What are the symptoms?

The disease progresses through three stages. The first stage - usually within a month of infection - produces a bullseye shaped rash, often accompanied by joint pains and flu-like symptoms, The second and third stages can produce a wide range of symptoms including arthritis, serious neurological disorders, loss of memory, heart problems meningitis and ultimately serious psychiatric disorders.

Lyme's Disease can be difficult to detect because it imitates other illnesses and because the course it takes may involve any or none of the three stages which may also overlap.

How to avoid infection

Participants should be advised to check that they are not carrying sheep ticks after activities.

E.COLI 0157

Background

Research shows that almost a quarter of cattle herds in Scotland and many sheep and goats carry and excrete *E.Coli 0157*. The animals do not become ill but can spread the organism to people by direct contact and indirectly via droppings and manure spread on land. The farmer or landowner will not be aware of animals excreting 0157 because the animals show no symptoms and there is no way of knowing when animals are infected.

Animal droppings on pasture are the greatest worry, especially where there are concentrations of animals in a given area, and in wet conditions. You may well be able to see the droppings: you will not see the contamination that they cause. The organism is known to survive in soil and animal droppings for weeks, but the levels generally decline over time. You will find it almost impossible to avoid getting animal droppings on boots or shoes in these circumstances. **Footwear can easily spread droppings into buildings, tents and vehicles.**

Fences, gates, stiles, climbing ropes and equipment can also become contaminated with animal droppings which may contain *E.Coli 0157*. **To be a risk, the *E.Coli 0157* has to be swallowed from contact with hands, contaminated food or contaminated water. Even tiny amounts of *E.Coli 0157* can be a severe risk.** Surface water run-off from fields containing animal droppings can lead to contamination of streams, burns etc, particularly during wet conditions. In wet conditions, contamination can spread more easily onto hands, footwear, tents, ropes etc, with the increased possibility that the organism can pass into the mouth or contaminate food and water.

How to avoid infection

These risks can be greatly reduced by adopting the following sensible precautions:

- Always wash hands before eating, drinking and smoking i.e. use soap, clean towels and, preferably, hot and running water.
- Ensure that water from burns and streams is treated before drinking.

These precautions, taken together, will greatly reduce the risk of *E.Coli 0157* and other infections from this source, and allow your camping or sports to continue in greater safety.

WEATHER FORECAST

Forecast can be obtained from Stornoway Coastguard: 01851 702013
01851 702014

Stornoway Coastguard also broadcast the local inshore forecast at approximately 0110 hrs and every four hourly thereafter.

0110, 0510, 0910, 1310, 1710, 2110 hrs

Glasgow Weather Centre	0141 221 1260
Council Internet	www.w-isles.gov.uk/weather
Met Office	www.met-office.gov.uk
BBC	www.bbc.co.uk/weather

THE BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

Force	Wind Speed (Knots)	Sea Conditions	Inland Conditions
0	Under 1	CALM No ripples on surface. Any swell is not caused by the wind.	LIGHT Smoke rises vertically.
1	1-3	LIGHT AIR Patches of ripples on surface.	LIGHT Smoke drifts. Stirring of flags.
2	4-6	LIGHT BREEZE Surface covered by ripples and waves up to 0.3 metre.	LIGHT Wind can be felt on face, rustles leaves and moves flags.
3	7-10	GENTLE BREEZE Small waves about 1 metre high and occasional white horses.	GENTLE Continues movement of leaves, twigs and flags.
4	11-16	MODERATE BREEZE Waves increase to 1-2 metres and white horses are common.	MODERATE Dust and papers blown about. Smaller branches swayed.
5	17-21	FRESH BREEZE Created waves of about 2 metres. Spray blown from crests.	FRESH Small trees sway about. Waves form on inland waters with crests.
6	22-27	STRONG BREEZE Waves of 2-4 metres with spray streaks and crests foaming.	STRONG Large branches swayed.
7	28-33	MODERATE GALE White foaming crests on waves of 4-5 metres, broken away in gusts.	STRONG Large trees swayed. Difficulty in walking against wind.
8	34-40	FRESH GALE Sea rough and disturbed waves of 6-8 metres with 'boiling' patches.	GALE Branches snapped off, small trees blown down. Extreme difficulty in walking against wind.
9	41-47	STRONG GALE Sea rough and disturbed waves of 6-8 metres with 'boiling' patches.	GALE Chimneys and slates blown down.
10	48-55	WHOLE GALE 9-12 metre waves. Visibility badly affected.	WHOLE GALE Large trees uprooted. Buildings damaged or blown down.
11	56-63	STORM Air full of spray. Large vessels may be damaged by waves of 14 metres.	WHOLE GALE Large trees uprooted. Building damaged or blown down.
12	Greater than 64	HURRICANE Waves over 14 metres will damage large ships and may cause small craft to founder.	WHOLE GALE Large trees uprooted. Building damaged or blown down.

NOTE: 1 knot = 0514 meters per second or 1.85 kilometres per hour
 1 foot = .305 of a metre.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar – 24hr Emergency Centre	01851 701702
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar Main Office	01851 703773
Community Education Office	01851 707450
Valtos Centre – Office	01851 672215
- Payphone	01851 672320
C Buchanan, Caretaker, Valtos Centre	01851 672374
D Maclean, Outdoor Education Officer	01851 707452
	07879493530
Doctors Surgery, Uig	01851 672283
Coastguards	01851 702013
	01851 702014
Western Isles Hospital	01851 704704
Police Station, Stornoway	01851 702222

TECHNICAL ADVISORS

LAND BASED ACTIVITIES

ANDY CUNNINGHAM
FRASER HOUSE
WEST SHORE STREET
ULLAPOOL
IV26 2UR

TEL: 01854 612429

WATER BASED ACTIVITIES

DON MACLEAN
OUTDOOR EDUCATION OFFICERS
WESTERN ISLES COUNCIL
TOWN HALL
STORNOWAY
ISLE OF LEWIS
HS1 2BE

TEL: 01851 707452

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Scottish Canoe Association
Scottish Education Department
Scottish Mountain Leader Training Board
Scottish Sports Council
Tayside Regional Council