

Activity safety guidelines — description document

Context

In 2009, in response to concerns about a number of serious incidents in the adventure and outdoor commercial sectors, the Department of Labour (DOL; incorporated into the new Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on 1 July 2012) was tasked to review practices within those sectors to determine if changes were needed to strengthen risk management and safety systems.

In June 2010, DOL released the [Review of Risk Management and Safety in the Adventure and Outdoor Commercial Sectors in NZ final report](#). The review recommended a number of actions including:

- that a tool be developed to offer generic safety guidance to the sector
- that additional guidance be developed and disseminated widely to better inform operators within the sector about their current responsibilities, particularly activity specific guidance.

The Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) was contracted by the DOL to manage the development of both these recommendations in consultation with industry.

The generic safety guidance tool has been developed in the form of the SupportAdventure.co.nz website.

The additional guidance has resulted in the development of activity specific safety guidelines (ASGs).

The ASGs are not statutory standards imposed by law; rather they are a set of voluntary guidelines that reflect industry's current recommendations for good practice and meeting all practicable steps for management of activity specific hazards.

Purpose

The ASGs aim to provide practical guidance for commercial operators providing specific adventure activities to actively manage the safety of those activities. The guidance is based on industry's current recommendations for good practice safety management.

Following the guidance will help operators to meet their legal requirements to take all practicable steps for identifying and managing hazards under the New Zealand Health and Safety Legislation, and particularly the Adventure Activity Regulations 2011.

Audience

Primary audience: the ASGs are designed for all operators providing the activity within the adventure tourism and commercial outdoor sector.

Secondary audience: safety auditors and regulators.

The ASGs will also be useful for other people involved in the activity such as trainers, people involved in providing the activity non-commercially such as volunteer organisations or schools, and for providers of activities that involve similar risks and hazards.

Outcomes

The key outcomes of this project are tied to both the ASGs themselves and to the process used to develop them. There are both direct and indirect outcomes.

The direct outcomes from the ASGs are:

- The ASGs will provide operators, auditors and regulators with consistent and clear recommendations on good practice safety management strategies for managing significant hazards.
- The ASGs will give assurance to government and the public that operators have access to current industry safety recommendations.

The indirect outcomes from the ASGs are:

- The ASGs and their development process will promote a strong safety culture by enabling and role modelling the sharing of industry safety information.
- The ASGs development process will give assurance to operators that they have access to, and can contribute to, information on current industry safety recommendations.
- The ASG development process will encourage the development of activity- based communities and possibly greater overall collaboration within the sector.
- The ASG development process will assist with establishing consistent levels of safety within and across activity groups.
- The ASG development process will instil confidence in all stakeholders that the guideline content is driven by technical experts¹.

¹ Technical Expert: for the purposes of the development process an activity specialist is a person with sufficient experience and knowledge in an activity who could be used to assist an organisation with technical tasks and safety advice. This person may be from within or outside the organisation and will usually hold a relevant high level qualification (where such a qualification exists). Supporting criteria include:

- an ability to represent current industry best practice on safety topics and
- activity experience from a variety of settings and/or
- is nationally recognised within the activity group for their activity safety knowledge.

ASG Principles

These principles will guide the development and use of the ASGs.

Principles for ASG use:

- ASG content will not be owned by any individual, organisation, or association — it will be hosted on the SupportAdventure website as a sector resource that is freely available to all.
- The ASGs will provide current industry information on what technical experts consider to be good practice for actively managing safety; this will be focused predominately on the management of significant hazards and prevention of death and serious harm.
- ASG technical safety management recommendations will come from technical experts.
- ASG content is aimed at assisting operators with the development of the activity specific aspects of their safety management systems; particularly the standard operating procedures.
- The guidelines will refer readers to www.SupportAdventure.co.nz for guidance on generic aspects of their safety management plans and systems.
- ASGs are written to help inform decision making; they do not remove the need for site specific hazard identification, assessment and management.
- ASG content is intended to represent the majority of commercial situations, it is recognised that due to a range of sites and varying conditions some operators will meet safety requirements in ways other than those recommended in the ASGs.

Principles for ASG development:

- The ASGs will be developed as per the process described in the ASG Development document.
- The ASGs will recognise other current industry accepted nationally recognised guidance material. They will refer to it and/or incorporate it whenever practicable.
- The guideline development process will be used to identify activity groups who do not have an industry recognised qualification — the group will be encouraged to engage in a qualifications development process.
- The guidelines will be developed in an efficient manner; this includes avoiding duplication of work and using a collaborative development approach with relevant organisations whenever practicable.
- ASG content will cover, as a minimum, the topics listed in the content outline contained in the ASG development process document.
- ASG content will be responsive to changes in activity group or sector knowledge and any resulting changes in recommended good practice.