



Overnight Camping

Good Practice Guide
Version 2
2021

Overnight Camping

The guidance in this GPG is for overnight camping in shelter of some description (tent, fly, bivy or hut), with or without road access. It includes camping that occurs on the Department of Conservation estate and council campsites, school grounds, private land and iwi land. There may or may not be permanent toilets, tap water, a power supply or fixed (landline) communications.

This guidance has been developed for overnight camping that is under direct supervision. However, it may also be helpful for indirectly supervised activities such as solo camping.

This guidance is specific to Overnight Camping activities and is designed to be used in conjunction with the [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#) and the [Overnight Camping Planning Template](#).

Potential value of activity

OVERNIGHT CAMPING CAN PROVIDE:

- A chance to explore new areas and stay overnight
- Experience of Te Ao Māori including learning local kaupapa and tikanga
- Excitement, fun and a sense of mystery and adventure
- An opportunity to learn and practice new skills
- Social interaction that doesn't happen when people go home at the end of a day
- Development of resilience in dealing with sleeping/sheltering in a new environment
- Opportunities for taking care and responsibility
- Being part of a team working on a shared challenge like shelter setup, and other camp activities
- Environmental experiences (clean air, sounds at night, night sky/stars)
- Freedom from media, cellphones and other digital devices and/or finding new ways to engage with technology.

“Who knew there were so many stars out there?”

Planning considerations

Activity Specific Planning

In addition to the generic considerations (see [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#)) organisers of overnight camping activities should consider:

- Checking the venue
 - Can you run your camp safely in the area? Identify potential hazards e.g., other users or visitors, communication blind spots, buildings, trees
 - Are there likely to be hunters in the area? Consider signage (e.g., school camp in process) and reflective rope around the boundary
- Driving and transportation
 - Do the drivers have the required licenses and experience to drive the vehicles, on the roads and in the conditions?
 - Will drivers have adequate downtime to be fresh and alert to drive? Consider using drivers who will not also be required to supervise participants overnight, to ensure they are well rested. The NZTA worktime and rest time requirements are a clear guide for how long rests and breaks should be.
<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/commercial-driving/commercial-safety/work-time-and-logbook-requirements>
 - Refer to the Transportation GPG for further considerations

Participants

How to ensure the activities match the participants' abilities and needs.

In addition to the generic participant considerations (see [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#)) organisers of overnight camping activities should consider:

- The inclusion and wellbeing of all participants, e.g., Māori and Pasifika, different cultures, LGBTQI+, different religions, food requirements
- Are there any special sleeping needs or vulnerabilities that leaders need to know about? For example, poor mobility, nighttime anxiety, sleep walking or bedwetting.
- Can participants be relied on to bring sufficient medications for an overnight stay (as opposed to the quantity needed for a day activity)? e.g., contact lens solution and spare lenses.

Supervision

The level and style of supervision typically required for this activity.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION STRUCTURE FOR OVERNIGHT CAMPING:

- If supervision is likely to be draining or result in broken sleep, you need to factor this in your supervision structure for the following day's activities. *Will leaders be fresh and alert enough to do the job effectively?* Designating a specific 'night supervisor' to ensure those on duty during the day get enough rest may be appropriate
- For a capable group of adults or teenagers, one overnight leader may be adequate. In some cases, responsible adults may be left without direct supervision (but with a leader 'on call' to assist in the case of an emergency), in which case you need to be able to demonstrate that the participants have the knowledge (e.g., first aid training) and resources (e.g., communications) to manage emergencies
- For a group of vulnerable individuals like children, people with disabilities or older participants you need as many leaders as are required to get them through the night comfortably with some staff resources in reserve to manage the situation and participants if there is an emergency. For example, you may need leaders in the tent next to participants with 'one eye open' to manage night toileting and other challenges
- Consider whether your participants need to sleep in single sex groups or not. Generally accepted practice in mixed sex school aged groups is that boys and girls sleep in separate tents and that there are both female and male leaders
- Consider how you provide safe spaces for toileting, changing and sleeping that support the inclusion and wellbeing of students who identify as sex, gender, or sexuality diverse (LGBTQI+)
- Consider how you provide appropriate toileting and waste facilities for those who are menstruating, or support for those who might menstruate for the first time
- Consider requiring participants to hand in medication to a leader to manage. Consider requiring caregivers to indicate (on medical form or directly onto medication bottle) how much should be taken

Experience can make all the difference in a tricky situation”



Leader competence

The experience and knowledge required by those running the activity, both for normal operation and for managing emergencies. What competence other assistant leaders need should also be considered (e.g. where parents or other adults are helping the person running the activity).

Skills and knowledge

- Are leaders trained and able to administer first aid?
- Are the leaders competent in establishing a safe and effective camp, including evaluating the suitability of the site?
- Can they set up the tents or support students to set them up?
- Can they use the cooking stoves safely to hygienically produce a nourishing meal?
- Are they going to be able to manage in bad weather?
- Are there specific tasks that they also need to do as part of the activity e.g., loading trailers, knowing the camp layout, collecting water, connecting power, managing communications equipment etc.?
- Do leaders understand their role in relation to other leaders, e.g., is one person ultimately in charge, should leaders make decisions independently or should they consult?

Overnight participant care

Overnight stays introduce additional supervisory challenges that may not be present during a day activity.

- Are leaders able to help participants with any specific or supportive needs where relevant?
- Are they able to help with toileting contingencies? (e.g., bedwetting or managing wheelchair access to a latrine site).

Relevant qualifications

The following qualifications contain an overnight camping component:

- National Certificate in Outdoor Recreation (Leadership) Level 4-5, with strand in Tramping
- New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Instruction) (Level 5) with strand in Bush
- NZOIA Bush 1

Resources and equipment

Consider what equipment and resources are required to ensure the activity can be run safely. The participants may be required to bring this or it may be provided to them.

Participant

- A way to keep gear dry e.g., pack liner, rubbish bags
- Personal sleeping gear (sleeping bags, camp mattress). Consider the season and how to ensure participants are warm enough during the night.
- Toiletries, including overnight medications (and spares of critical medications).
- Warm dry clothes for sleeping (if daytime clothing gets wet).
- Personal lighting (headlamps and torches).

Group

- Shelter (tents, flies). Consider the forecasted weather, particularly wind, when choosing the appropriate shelter.
- Check tents/shelters are in working order before you go. When tenting at a drive-in site it is often useful to bring extra guy lines, pegs and tarps.
- If walking in to use a public back country hut always carry an emergency shelter for the whole group (e.g., a fly). This may be needed if the hut cannot be reached or found (e.g., due to getting lost or flooded rivers) or if the facility is full when you arrive.
- Cooking equipment and food. Ensure cookers and lanterns have the correct type of fuel in sufficient quantities. Also check that fuel and gas lines do not leak when under pressure/during use. Consider bringing spare seals and/or stove repair equipment.
- Hygiene. Make it easy for participants to toilet and keep hands clean. Bring hygiene/toileting supplies (e.g., soap, sanitiser, toilet paper). If a latrine or toileting holes need to be dug bring an appropriate shovel or trowel. Consider reflective markers to help participants find the toilet area easily in darkness. Make sure there are opportunities for participants to wash and sanitise hands after toileting and before or after eating.
- Group lighting. Make sure all leaders and participants have access to effective night lighting (torches, headlamps, lanterns etc. with adequate spare batteries) for getting around safely after dark. These should be readily available if a group is likely to be arriving late or setting up in the dark.



- First aid kit and other emergency gear (e.g., fire extinguisher, fire blanket). An example of a generic group first aid kit contents list can be found here: <https://www.supportadventure.co.nz/assets/Peak-Safety-Outdoor-First-Aid-Kit-List.pdf>
- Smoke alarms: when sleeping in bunkrooms, huts or other built structures it is good practice to have a working smoke alarm. Some camp facilities or backcountry huts do not have smoke alarms or smoke alarm batteries maybe flat. Consider whether it is appropriate to have a set of smoke alarms that you can bring and temporarily place in rooms where participants are sleeping overnight.

Leader

- List of participants, including any health or other needs that the leader should know about.
- Safety plan including emergency contact numbers (see [Overnight Camping Planning Template](#)).
- Emergency communications e.g., PLB, satellite phone, inReach. Is there cellphone reception and where are the blind spots?
- Site map and information e.g., instructions for using the camp, how to turn on the power.



Leave No Trace (LNT)/Environmental Protection

Consider how you can plan your activity to minimise long term damage to the environment. Overnight camping has a higher impact on the environment than other outdoor activities because participants are present at a site for longer with more concentrated traffic and waste.

There are seven key LNT principles:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable ground
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimise the effects of fire
6. Respect wildlife and farm animals
7. Be considerate of others

For further information about LNT see

<https://leavenotrace.org.nz/resources/>

<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/environment/>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/>

Further support

Places to gain more information from:

Mountain Safety Council – Bushcraft Manual – Outdoor Skills for the NZ Bush

<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/bushcraft-manual/>

Mountain Safety Council – Get Outdoors series

<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/camping/>

Mountain Safety Council – Plan My Walk

<https://planmywalk.nz/home>

[Overnight Camping Planning Template](#)

[Overarching Risk Management Guidance](#)