Adventure and outdoor

pre-season checklist

Intentionally blank

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Reliable and Safe Communication

We know great communication is critical to good operations, but do we spend enough time and effort making it all that it can be?

> *"Nearly every potential hazard is known and identified by someone, but for whatever reason has not been communicated (or was communicated but not acted upon) to the individual capable of correcting it"*

Extracted from the summary of a Flight Safety Foundation Report

Questions:

- If each of my team was asked about the reliability and consistency of communication in our operation, how would they rate it (3/10 - 8/10)? What would make it 10/10?

- As we approach another busy summer, have I emphasised to my team the importance of free-flowing 'safe' communication and why it is so critical to our operation?

Comments directly from operators:

- *No one must ever be afraid to ask…*

- *Everything is written down in our company, but deciphering it is a bit of a challenge!*

- *Don't sit on issues or concerns – deal with them directly and move on…*

- *Provide positive feedback when possible, not only is it fair to do so, it also gives greater credibility when you have to be a bit firmer…*

- *Don't feel under pressure to know all the answers – just to <u>find</u> them*

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):

SOPs are a written summary of a day at work for your team. Great for induction training, they can be sent to a new employee weeks ahead of their employment date, allowing a much smoother and safer period of initial training.

A SOP manual is the 'bible' for all training and checking and helps ensure consistency amongst those undertaking the checking and training.

Well written SOPs that are understood by all team members and guide day to day operations are a cornerstone of every operation, they:

- Transfer rules & daily procedures into a practical form

- Are the bible for day-to-day operations

- Must be a controlled document showing where copies are held, which is the latest version and when a review is due

- Must be developed and reviewed with staff input

- Must be correctly written: clear, simple, direct and unambiguous

- Need to be reviewed regularly

- Are a great resource for training, bringing consistency

   But

   Judgement and initiative are still required by every individual!

Questions:

- Have I ensured that every member of my team has read and understood our SOPs prior to summer and they accurately reflect our day to day operations?

- Does everyone in my team interpret the SOPs the same way i.e. what items have a zero tolerance for variation (strictly procedural) versus those to which initiative and judgement may be applied?

- Have I emphasised the importance of standard operating procedures to my team?

Comments directly from operators:

- *Beware of the 'exception becoming the rule'*

- *It's the easiest thing in the world to develop a procedure, it's the hardest thing in the world to keep it working*

- *Lead by example – consistently & regularly*

- *Apply the 'margin for error' rule for decision making to support your SOPs*

Training and checking:

At any moment, on any day, each of your team should be capable of meeting an acceptable standard i.e. while training is about building skill levels, checking sessions are not 'high moments', but rather confirmation of a standard being maintained through both self-checking (on a daily basis) and external checks.

Questions:

- Is my team's training and checking complete <u>and</u> recorded as I head into summer?

- Have I instilled in my team the need for <u>daily</u> self-checking and evaluation to ensure high standards are maintained between checks?

- Have I considered getting a peer perspective on our processes?

Comments directly from operators:

- *Training – seek to provide more information than is strictly necessary*

- *Document <u>everything</u> you do, even if it's not formal checking or training…*

- *Take every training opportunity – utilise senior staff when appropriate*

- *Seek 'real' situations to hone skills…*

- *Know what standard you require and <u>never</u> accept less*
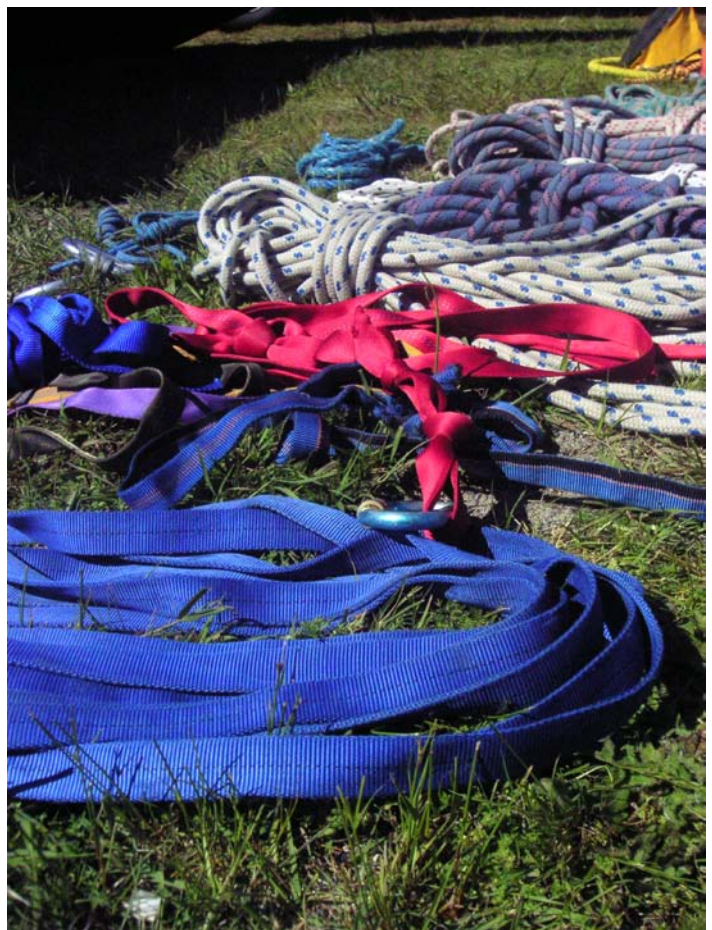
Visitor Briefings

Visitor briefings are integral to running a safe operation. Your SOP lets your guides know what you expect of them, they are trained professionals and you trust them to do their job to the best of their ability. The piece missing in this puzzle is how you and your guides explain the activity to your visitors; the risks and realities that exist once they strap on the harness or pull on the wetsuit.

Questions:

- Do my visitors know what <u>they</u> need to do to keep themselves safe?

- Do all of my visitors receive safety briefings?

- Are the contents of our safety briefings specified in our SOPs?

- Do all of my staff deliver a consistent safety message, albeit in their own way, every time?

- Have I adequately addressed potential issues for visitors from different cultures? (eg: cue cards, guides learning key words and phrases in different languages)

Comments directly from operators:

- *I make the time to regularly observe safety briefings given by all my guides - this is especially important with guides returning from the off-season*

- *If something is missed from a safety briefing, you can almost guarantee someone will do exactly that thing*

- *Visitors are assessing your business from the first moment. Professional briefings tell them a lot about your attitude to safety and the company as a whole*
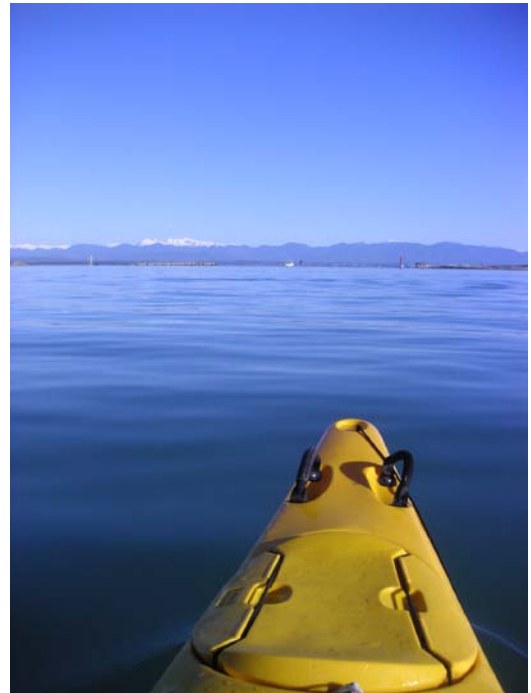
Working safety reporting systems:

Nil (or very low) reporting = A serious culture problem

It does <u>not</u> equal 'no problems'

Working safety reporting systems are not a seldom-used folder on a high shelf, but rather a prominent, active and well understood part of your operation. They are used for identifying and mitigating simple safety observations, 'but for the grace of God' events and finally – actual incidents. They:

- Are likely to be a combination of verbal and written reporting

- Help to <u>ensure</u> timely action...

- Must be owned/driven by someone

- Should preferably be one form - simple!

- Help to show positive or negative trends

- Are successful when action is taken, findings are reviewed with staff and open support is demonstrated to those who use the system – all of which helps ensure high reporting levels

- Assist with the update of company manuals

Questions:

- Is my safety reporting system a prominent, active and well understood part of my operation?

- Has the true value of my safety reporting system been fully explained to everyone in my team as we approach summer?

- Do I ensure that every concern raised by my team is addressed in a timely and appropriate manner?

- Do I actively use the system myself and ensure that I or someone else in my company actively drives and promotes the system?

- Do my internal audits focus on things that <u>really</u> matter?

Comments directly from operators:

- *Safety failures are a recognised risk of outdoor activity, it is reporting and rectification that counts…*

- *Developing good situational awareness is fundamental to good risk management*

- *Actively use and promote your safety systems, leading by example is crucial to their overall effectiveness*

Integral to a working safety reporting system is a **crisis plan**. The process of developing an operational crisis plan is an opportunity to work through possible scenarios and identify areas to focus on.

A good crisis plan should:

- Be a controlled document, ie: of limited distribution, showing where copies are held, which is the latest version and when a review is due

- Be easily identifiable: coloured red, and positioned clear of other documents

- Show clear step-by-step procedures for the range of likely emergencies – the fewer words the better!

- Provide a column where, as each action is completed, the time is noted alongside

- Include a staff and next of kin contact list

- Include a key stakeholders contact list

- Include a reminder to cancel emergency services if they are <u>not</u> required

- List emergency equipment carried if applicable

- Document who will be responsible for talking to the media

- Be regularly reviewed – phone numbers, names, layout and the appropriateness of the actions themselves

- Be the basis for <u>regular</u> scenario training by all staff – including handling the media

Culture and Leadership:

Ultimately you and your senior team members determine the strength of your risk management processes. Positive safety cultures trickle down, not up. Leading by example will establish a team who take personal responsibility for the welfare of their visitors, other team members and themselves – surely the ultimate goal of any operation.

INDUSTRY PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN SAFE ADVENTURE OPERATIONS

Founding principles

Operators have a positive safety culture driven by committed leaders

A positive safety culture: The first principle upon which all others are founded, it is characterised by an overt commitment to safety at every level of an organisation; it relies on leaders promoting and adhering to good safety practices e.g. leading by example, consistently.

Organisations with a positive safety culture are characterised by communications founded on mutual trust, by shared perceptions of the importance of safety and by confidence in the efficacy of preventive measures.

Operators have a safety management system (SMS) relevant to their operation

Safety management system: A coordinated and comprehensive set of processes specifically designed to optimise safety performance. An SMS addresses safety across all aspects of the organisation and includes provisions for recruitment, training, safe communication, well documented standard operating procedures, internal and external assessment programmes, safety reporting, incident reporting, and emergency action plans. An SMS addresses the potential for both systemic weaknesses and active failures.

Additional core principles

Operators have an external assessment before commencing operations

Initial external assessment: An assessment by an independent third party appropriately qualified to assess and approve the type of activity being undertaken.

Its primary function is to assess the SMS and provide operators with advice and support: is the SMS comprehensive, workable and tailored correctly for that activity? It includes a site visit.

Operations have ongoing external assessments

Ongoing external assessments: Primarily for verifying compliance with approved standards, procedures and/or national standards where available; as with the 'initial' audit, they assess the relevancy and effectiveness of the SMS and provide advice and support to operators. They also include a site visit.

Operators have competent staff

Staff competency: Organisations ensure staff have appropriate experience supported by relevant training and/or qualifications. Induction training is followed by ongoing training at a frequency and depth that is consistent with the nature of the activity. The correct balance of experienced to less-experienced staff is consciously managed.

Operators communicate risks and responsibilities

Risk and safety information to clients: prior to undertaking the activity, clients are provided with appropriate risk and safety information in a form and depth that is tailored for the activity, but addresses cross-cultural communication barriers. Information is delivered so clients are clear of the risks and their responsibilities in helping mitigate them. Client information can be delivered in writing, verbally, pictorially or via a combination of mediums.

Operators have well maintained equipment that is fit for purpose

Well maintained, fit for purpose equipment: equipment and/or infrastructure is subject to regular review under the SMS framework. It is maintained or replaced at intervals that ensure it remains fit for purpose and suitable for commercial delivery of the activity.

Operators share safety information

Exchange of safety information: organisations make a conscious and formalised effort to share safety information (including lessons learned) with others while externally seeking information that may strengthen their own safety provisions. Commercial interests are pushed aside in the interests of achieving better safety outcomes through shared learning.

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