

Outdoor Program Risk Management Toolkit

Teens to Trails - Outdoor Club Leadership Conference 2023

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Preface: Where feasible, involving students in elements of the risk management process will help develop their outdoor skills and leadership capacities. It will also likely make your trips safer and help you identify and manage additional risks!

- **Develop Protocols and Emergency Plans**
 - Training and Certifications
 - Ensure trip leaders have adequate training for the activities and trips they will lead.
 - Develop an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
 - The EAP should contain at minimum:
 - Emergency contacts for emergency services and school administrators. For search and rescue in Maine, call the Maine Warden Service dispatch center closest to you, and/or call 911. Maine Warden Service dispatch center numbers:
 - Augusta: 1-800-452-4664
 - Bangor: 1-800-432-7381
 - Houlton: 1-800-924-2261
 - Communication protocols that identify frequency and methods of communication with school administration, parents/guardians/etc.
 - Emergency procedures that describe how a trip leader will handle emergencies including injuries, lost/missing participants, severe weather events, behavioral incidents, and evacuation procedures.
 - Reporting and documentation protocols for before and after each trip, including incident reporting.
- **Pre-Trip Planning**
 - Define and Communicate Trip Purpose and Objectives
 - Help potential participants determine whether the trip objectives and itinerary align with their goals, experience, interests, etc.
 - Emergency Contacts
 - Collect emergency contact information for all participants. Make one copy for your trip leader and a copy for staff who you would call in the event of an emergency.
 - Medical Information

- Group Supervision
 - Conduct frequent headcounts and maintain frequent communication with participants.
- Frequent Water, Food, and Rest Breaks
 - Take breaks to maintain energy levels and morale.
- Recognize Potential Compounding Hazards
 - Many outdoor incidents are the result of compounding hazards. While your group may be prepared to handle some hazards/risk, when the hazards start to stack up, incidents and injury become more likely. For example, your group may be well prepared for a day out in the rain, but if you also find that you are behind schedule and will be out after dark, you now are facing compounding hazards. Keep an eye out for instances in which hazards start to compound and change course early to avoid additional risk.
- **Follow Up**
 - Debrief
 - At the end of the trip or at a future meeting, conduct a post-trip debrief to review what went well and what could be improved for future trips.
 - Incident Reports
 - Document any incidents or near-misses. Communicate any incident reports to school leadership and parents/guardians.
 - Solicit Feedback from Participants
 - Encourage participants and staff to provide feedback on the trip to inform future planning.

A Sampling of Outdoor Injuries/Incidents

This is a list of some of the most common minor and major injury and incident types in outdoor settings. Review the list to make sure you know how to 1) prevent, 2) recognize, and 3) treat each of these injuries. If you would like additional training, consider taking a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course to gain skills and practice. This is also a good list to review when making your first aid kit – ask yourself “Am I carrying the tools to respond to these incidents/injuries?”

Common Injuries (Relatively Minor)

Blisters	Burns (sun, stoves, liquid)	Sprains/strains
Minor cuts & abrasions	Stomach ache	Headache
Insect Bites	Allergies (minor)	Anxiety
Heat Stress	Cold	Diarrhea

Significant Injuries

Hypothermia (major)	Fractured/Dislocated Bones	Anaphylaxis
Asthma	Diabetic Emergency	Cardiac Issues
Drownings	Missing Persons	Spinal or Head Injury
Mental Health (major)	Lightning Strike	Seizure
Choking	Severe Bleed	Burns (severe)

Sample First Aid Kit List

Note: Adapt your first aid kit based on group size, weather conditions, activities, length of trip, etc. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and I also don't anticipate you will always carry all of these items. There are certainly items that are redundant or can be improvised. This list is intended to help you consider what you want to include in your first aid kit.

Personal Protective Equipment:	Tools	Bandages/Wound Care
Gloves (Nitrile)	CPR Mask	Ace Wrap
Ziploc/Trash bag	Pencils	Band Aids (assorted sizes)
Hand Sanitizer	Sharpies	Tampons & Pads
Hand Wipes	Paper/SOAP Note	Alcohol / Iodine Wipes
	SAM Splint	Mole Skin
Medications**	Tweezers	Burn Gel
Aspirin	10ml Syringe	Gauze Pads
Benadryl/diphenhydramine	Dental Floss	Tourniquet
Antidiarrheal	Scissors/Knife	Kerlix (Roll of Gauze)
Ibuprofen	Safety Pins	Triangular Bandages
Acetaminophen/Tylenol	First Aid Book	
Antacid/Tums		
Jello Powder/Glucose gel		
Topical antibiotic		
EpiPen*		
Personal Medications		

**consult your school nurse and school administrators on policies related to providing medication to participants.*

The 10 Essentials +

1. Navigation

- a. Map
- b. Compass
- c. GPS

2. Sun Protection

- a. Sunscreen
- b. chapstick
- c. Sunglasses
- d. Hat
- e. Layers

3. Insulation

- a. Extra clothing including thermal or fleece layers and waterproof layers

4. Illumination

- a. Headlamp or flashlight
- b. Extra batteries
- c. Spare light source

5. First Aid Kit

- a. See above

6. Fire

- a. Waterproof matches
- b. Lighter

7. Repair Tools

- a. Multi-tool
- b. Knife
- c. Duct tape
- d. Cord/Rope

8. Nutrition

- a. Extra food

9. Hydration

- a. Water bottles
- b. Water purification methods (filter, tablets, etc.)

10. Shelter

- a. Bivy sack, tarp, tent, space blanket

Some additional items I recommend:

- Whistle (one for every participant!)
- Satellite phone/beacon
- Toilet paper
- Human waste management (Wag bags, trowel, etc)
- Stove and pot
- Ear plugs
- Webbing or ski straps
- Waterproof backpack cover
- Trash bags
- Bug spray
- Insulite pad
- _____
- _____

Cold weather additions:

- Spare gloves & hat
- Neck Gaiter
- Boot Gaiters
- Microspikes/traction devices
- Water bottle insulators / thermos
- Sleeping bag

Practice Scenarios

1. You are leading a group of high school students on a day hike to summit a mountain. The weather forecast predicted clear skies, but unexpectedly, dark clouds roll in, and a thunderstorm approaches. What steps do you take to ensure the safety of your group, considering the risk of lightning, slippery trails, and group members' anxiety?
2. During a multi-day camping trip in a remote wilderness area, one of your students develops symptoms of food poisoning. You are several miles away from the nearest road or medical facility. How do you handle the situation, considering the severity of the illness and the group's ability to continue the trip?
3. You are leading a group of students on a river canoe trip. One of your students falls on some slippery rocks and is now bleeding from their chin and telling you that their wrist really hurts. How do you respond to the immediate danger while ensuring the safety of the entire group?
4. During a winter snowshoeing trip in a remote area, a student falls through the ice of a frozen pond and becomes partially submerged in cold water. The student becomes hypothermic. How do you manage the situation, considering the risk of hypothermia and the remote location?
6. While on a camping trip with your group, you discover that the neighboring campsite is occupied by noisy, and aggressive individuals who continue to yell late into the night. You hear some of them make racist and homophobic remarks. How do you handle this situation, addressing both the immediate concerns of your group and the potential conflict with the neighboring campers, while maintaining a safe and respectful environment for your students?
7. While teaching students basic fishing skills near a river, you realize that one of the students has gone missing from the group. Despite your initial search efforts, you cannot locate the missing student. What steps do you take to initiate a search and manage the situation while ensuring the safety and well-being of the rest of the group?
8. While on a camping trip, a student accidentally knocks over a pot of boiling water, causing a severe scald burn on their lap. How do you respond to provide first aid for the burn while ensuring the safety of the group, especially given the remote area and limited medical supplies?
9. You are leading a sea kayaking expedition with a group of high school students. While paddling, one of the students suddenly experiences a panic attack. They become extremely anxious, have difficulty breathing, and express fear of being in the open water. The group is several miles away from the launch point, and the weather conditions are calm. How do you respond to the situation, provide support to the student, and ensure the safety of the entire group during the sea kayak trip?