

AIR CADETS ADVENTURE TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTION No 21

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Air Cadets Health and Safety Manual – ACP 5

1. The Air Cadet Organization (ACO) Health and Safety (H&S) Manual, ACP 5, has been written to provide Air Cadets staff with access to H&S related information. ACP 5, Chapter 4, covering Risk Management, and Chapter 5, detailing H&S Procedures, are especially relevant to the Air Cadets Adventure Training (ACAT) Scheme. In effect, all adventure training activities must have a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment (RA). This should be carried out in accordance with the RA procedure within ACP 5. It has been agreed with the ACO Head of H&S that Generic RAs for adventure training activities are incorporated into ACP 17.

General Guidance

2. It is an observation of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) that most accidents, even most serious and fatal accidents, occur on the activities which were considered before hand to be the lowest risk. Evidence suggests that even common sense measures are not followed, largely because those involved believed there was no risk. AALA urge every instructor and leader, who leads groups of young people, to realise that no outing is risk free. Moreover, society expects leaders and instructors to fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously, and with the same attention to detail as a professional instructor/leader would do on more demanding activities. It is not what you write that drives safety but what you do. The key questions to be asked by managers are “Have you done a risk assessment”? and “Are you competent”?

3. The ACAT Scheme will always have elements of risk. Activities may be hazardous in themselves and human error and unforeseen failures cannot be eliminated. The aim of Risk Management, therefore, is to take positive precautions against these dangers and to apply experience correctly and sensibly. A proper balance must be struck between the degree of realism in training and the maintenance of a sense of challenge on the one hand, and the need to avoid the risk of death and injury.

4. Adventure training activities, by their very nature, are rigorous and demanding. However, those involved in expeditions can be exposed to unnecessary risks unless adequate duty of care, H&S procedures and risk assessment requirements are properly implemented. H&S laws cover all those whose work and activity creates risks to themselves and to others. Those who create risks are required to identify, eliminate or control them. Furthermore, the Air Cadet Organization (ACO) requires a positive commitment to H&S by every member of the ACO and, within their sphere of responsibilities, commanders at every level are to ensure that all identifiable hazards are assessed, and action put in hand to minimise the risks to H&S.

5. In light of the above, the following criteria provides the basis for deciding which adventure activities should be subject to special high risk scrutiny and control:

- a. Where there is a significant risk of death or serious injury.
- b. Where the competence of the instructors/leaders is crucial.
- c. Where the activity is vulnerable to changes in weather or the natural environment.
- d. Where there is a significant risk to the safety of the group, if severe problems are encountered.
- e. Where communication and the alert of emergency services are difficult to activate.

Framework for Scrutiny

6. The primary duty of those responsible for authorising and leading expeditions is to have a systematic approach to recognising risks and taking preventive or controlling action. This safety management system should draw on existing H&S legislation, have regard for other relevant general guidance issued by the H&S Commission and Executive and meet the requirements of the host nation. All ACAT Scheme activities are, therefore, subject to the following process:

- a. **Part 1 – ‘Site Specific’ Risk Assessment (RA)** – The Activity Commander starts with a blank RA form and identifies the hazards and control measures to ensure a reasonably safe activity.
- b. **Part 2 – ‘Generic’ Risk Assessment (GRA)** – The GRA provides the typical hazards and control measures that might be expected from a particular activity. The Activity Commander must apply this assessment to the activity site to identify any residual risks and their control measures.

Note: The ‘Dynamic’ Aspect of Risk Assessment – In essence, a continuing factor of the risk assessment during the activity, completed quickly due to rapidly changing even unforeseeable circumstances, constantly repeated and re-evaluated by competent instructors, leaders and coaches.

The Risk Assessment Process

7. Before authorising, ACAT Scheme activities, Sqn, Wing and Region must be satisfied that the activity instructors/leaders are competent and have:

- a. Identified all the hazards created by the activity
- b. Evaluated the risk and recorded the findings and decided whether existing precautions are adequate, or more should be done.
- c. Reviewed the risk assessment:
 - (1) As activity plans progress.

- (2) When changes affect the activity (move of location, change in weather).
- (3) When there is a change of activity leader or activity participants.

Safety Arrangements General

8. When assessing the ACAT Scheme safety management system of an activity there should be evidence of the following:

- a. A policy, which creates a 'safe system of work' culture of overall safety.
- b. A mechanism to turn the policy into practice.
- c. A planning strategy using systematic methods.
- d. Monitoring to ensure the preventive or corrective actions are implemented and are successful.
- e. Reviewing performance and feeding back.
- f. Benchmarking the ACAT Scheme safety management system.

9. The safety arrangements made by a Sqn/Wing should be appropriate to the size of the ACAT Scheme programme and the extent of activity programmes offered. There must be a clearly defined chain of responsibility for management of any preventive measures required to ensure participants' safety. The Sqn/Wing ACAT Scheme management will need to control, monitor and periodically review the preventive measures, and the risk assessment they were based on, to make sure they are maintained effectively.

10. Such arrangements may be a very simple aide memoir or check list in the case of a single ACAT activity, which has a technical or subject matter expert and qualified, or assessed as competent instructor. However, the large ACAT Scheme programme would need more comprehensive formalised arrangements, in the form of detailed standard operating procedures, backed up by an internal safety auditing system. Importantly, it is the ACAT Scheme provider who is to make sure that each safety measure is in place whenever it is needed to ensure participants safety. These safety measures should be appropriate to:

- a. The location and the hazard level at which the ACAT Scheme activities are to be undertaken.
- b. The participants, qualifications/experience and any special requirements.

11. These guidelines should cover most of the safety aspects of ACAT. In their standard operating procedures for the conduct of activities, Sqns/Wings should set out criteria for abandonment or modification of activities to ensure the well being of participants and their withdrawal to safety in the event of bad or deteriorating conditions of the natural environment or weather. Sqns and Wings must also maintain written procedures for accidents and emergencies.

12. In turn, responsibility is placed upon leaders and instructors to develop a continuing awareness of safety aspects, and to consider safety fully, in preparing for and conducting exercises. In the planning of expeditions, particular attention is to be paid to the following points:

- a. Developing an awareness of safety.
- b. The need for objectives to be progressive so that participants develop confidence without being extended to the point that they are either exhausted or are faced with situations beyond their developing skills.
- c. Ensuring that all personnel are properly equipped.
- d. Checking equipment for serviceability before use.
- e. Considering the effects of deteriorating weather (visibility, precipitation, wind, sea state) on the conduct of an exercise and, where appropriate, developing contingency plans. It should be borne in mind that in the mountains weather changes are often sudden and violent.
- f. Ensuring that, where safety rules have been defined, all are aware both of the rules and the purpose behind them.

13. The expedition leader is to leave the following details with the Sqn/Wing where designated by the Sqn/Wing, before departure on an expedition:

- a. Location of base camp and training area.
- b. Nominal Roll.
- c. Details of communications and mobile telephone numbers.
- d. Estimated time of return.
- e. Copy of Risk Assessment.

14. Prior to either UK Based or Overseas expeditions, the expedition leader is to obtain the local weather forecast, ascertain the location of the nearest rescue facility and leave the following information with a responsible person (police, warden or landowner), before commencing the daily expedition activities:

- a. Intended route.
- b. Estimated time of return.

Safety Guidelines and Generic Risk Assessments

15. Safety Guidelines and Generic Risk Assessments are detailed in the following ACATIs:

- a. ACATI No.22 – Safety Guidelines and Generic Risk Assessments for Trekking, Camping, Orienteering and Mountain Biking.
- b. ACATI No.23 – Safety Guidelines and Generic Risk Assessments for Climbing, Abseiling and Climbing Walls and Towers.
- c. ACATI No.24 – Safety Guidelines and Generic Risk Assessment for Canoeing and Kayaking.