Bring ‘em Back Alive: Managing Risk in High Adventure Activities

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Define Risk
Identify
Assess
Plan
Decide

Diagram:

- Identify
- Decide
- Plan
- Assess

Flow:
1. Identify
2. Decide
3. Plan
4. Assess
5. Identify
6. Decide
7. Plan
8. Assess
What Risks Can You Find In This Picture?
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What Is Risk Management?

What is Risk?
- Potential for Loss and Injury\(^1\)
- Potential for Gain, Growth, Development\(^1\)
- Risk = Frequency/Probability of Occurrence X Severity of Outcome

“A way of thinking about an event that leads to a way of conducting the event in order to achieve as low level of foreseeable risk as possible”\(^2\)

“Legal and ethical responsibility to maintain as low level of foreseeable risk as reasonably possible for any given outdoor activity from the standpoint of the health, safety and well-being of participants, while still enabling participants to benefit from the experience.” \(^2\)

\(^1\) Rick Curtis
\(^2\) James Hellwege
How Do We Manage Risk?

“The exposure to risk/challenge is what impels people to personal growth” ¹

How do we manage risk?

- Eliminate
- Reduce
- Accept

¹ Curtis
Crew Resource Management

- Aviation world developed *Crew Resource Management* concept – we can adapt that to our High Adventure Crews
- Increase trust and effective problem-solving
- Clarify crew mission, vision, goals, roles, decision-making, decision points
- Effective decision-making based on all available information

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3 Leemon/Schimelpfenig
Introduction
Crew Resource Management

- Appropriate workload/decision-making distribution/assignments/delegation
- Use talents of entire crew
- Maintain focus, situational awareness
- Clarify communications
- Increase input from less experienced crew members
- Manage stress and fatigue

3 Leemon/Schimelpfenig
Introduction
Identify Risks

Activities Risks—

Backpacking; canoeing; kayaking; climbing; horse packing; mountain biking; ...

Environmental Risks—

Weather; wildlife; plants; terrain; ...

Human Factors Risks—

Crew abilities; crew dynamics; crew knowledge/skills/experience; crew health (mental and physical); ...

Equipment Risks—

Fail to operate as advertised; don’t have what’s needed for this situation; ...

Foreseeable Risk—

“may be reasonably anticipated”, “can easily be imagined or known about before it happens”  

2 Hellwege Chapter 1
Assess Risks

- Likelihood / frequency of occurrence
- Severity of impact

Combinations of risks can amplify both likelihood and severity

- Human factors (inexperience) x environmental (severe weather)
- Environmental (cold weather) x activities (canoeing)

³ Leemon/Schimelpfenig
Plan: How Do We Achieve Our Mission, Vision, Goals?

📍 What—do we want to achieve? Crew consensus on what we want to do as a crew

📍 When—what season, how long, ...

📍 Where—location, terrain, ...

📍 Who—
  - Is eligible—what skills, knowledge, capability, physical health, mental / emotional maturity, ...
  - Assign authority and roles/responsibilities—crew advisor/co-advisor(s), crew leader, medic, chaplain’s aide, navigator, quartermaster—duty roster
  - Build good Expedition Behavior in crew—12 Points of Scout Law—includes Active Follower-ship

4 Kosseff Chapter 11
Plan: How Do We Achieve Our Mission, Vision, Goals?

What (Part Deux)—do we need to carry with us (gear, food, clothing, ...)

How—will we get there; will we prepare/train; will we obtain our needed gear; will we get emergency help if needed; will we exit in case of contingency

Communicate—Create Activity Brief before each event with this information to all hands... and to parents as well before we go

3 Leemon/Schimelpfenig Chapter 2
Good Communications Climate

Activity Briefing

- What are we doing
- How are we doing it
- When
- Who
- What hazards
- How to manage risks

4 Kosseff Chapter 11
Plan: How Do We Manage An Emergency?

- What—resources will we have available, organic to crew, external from rescue services?
- When/How—will we decide to self-help, to call for help?
- Where—will we exit to in an emergency each day on the trek?
- Who—in our crew has what skills, knowledge, capability, physical health, mental / emotional maturity, to manage the emergency; to get help; to provide direct assistance; ...
Plan: How Do We Manage An Emergency?

What (Part Deux)—do we need to carry with us if we self-evacuate? Does our “go for help” party need to carry with them if we decide to send for help?

How—will we decide to self-help, to call for help; will we get emergency help; will we exit in case of contingency; transport injured crew members; shelter in place if needed; ...
Informed Decisions

- Avoid/eliminate risk—decide to not proceed
- Accept/reduce risk—proceed with activity
- After gathering information and facts, it comes down to judgment
  - “Good Judgment comes from Experience. Experience comes from Bad Judgment.”
- Judgment—perception of risk
- Beware of complacency when assessing risk and making decisions

³ Leemon/Schimelpfenig
Chapter 5
Decide to Proceed

Accept risk—proceed with activity as planned

Reduce risk
  – Modify activity and proceed
  – Additional training/skills/knowledge
  – Adjust equipment needs
Continuously Manage Risk On High Adventure Activities

- Identify
- Assess
- Plan
- Decide

Diagram:

1. Identify
2. Plan
3. Decide
4. Assess

Flow:
Identify → Plan → Decide → Assess → Identify
Good Expedition Behavior

- Self-awareness
- Self-leadership
- Selflessness
- Commitment
- Tolerance
- Consideration
- Trust
- Communication
- Humility
- Sense of humor

\(^4\text{Kosseff Chapter 11}\)
The Sweet 16 of BSA Safety

1. Qualified Supervision
2. Physical Fitness
3. Buddy System
4. Safe Area or Course
5. Equipment Selection & Maintenance
6. Personal Safety Equipment
7. Safety Procedures & Policies
8. Skill Level Limits
9. Weather Check
10. Planning
11. Communications
12. Permits & Notices
13. First-Aid Resources
14. Applicable Laws
15. CPR Resource
16. Discipline
Philmont Risk Advisory

- Cardiovascular disease
- Hypertension
- Insulin dependent diabetes
- Excessive body weight
- Epilepsy
- Asthma
- Allergy or anaphylaxis
- Recent musculoskeletal injuries/surgery
- Psychological/emotional difficulties
- Medication—chronic conditions well controlled
Role of **Advisors**

▲ Duty of Care—An obligation to act toward others and the public with the degree of watchfulness, attention, caution, and prudence that a reasonable person in similar circumstances would have.  

▲ Coach, mentor, *advise*—Intervene for health and safety

- Build the team—four stages of team growth
- Develop open communications climate—anyone can speak up with concern for managing the risk before the crew

5 Attarian Chapter 2
References


4. AMC Guide to Outdoor Leadership, by Alex Kosseff, 2003

5. Risk Management in Outdoor and Adventure Programs, by Aram Attarian, 2012
References


National Outdoor Leadership School
References

- 5. Risk Management in Outdoor and Adventure Programs, by Aram Attarian, 2012
Thanks for Listening!

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