

Burma Trail

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)



1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Burma Trail activity to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are supported.

2. Scope

Applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, supervising adults, and participants involved in the River Challenge.

3. Description of Activity

The Burma Trail is a supervised team-building activity designed to develop confidence, trust, sensory awareness, and resilience by encouraging participants to navigate a marked trail with reduced vision.

The activity is typically conducted after dark, although blindfolds may be used during daylight hours or when there is sufficient moonlight. Participants follow a fixed guide rope through a series of natural obstacles while being supervised by instructors or group leaders.

The first round is generally completed quietly to encourage participants to develop awareness of their surroundings and build confidence. Additional rounds may include varying levels of challenge appropriate to the age, confidence, and ability of the group.

The activity takes place in a natural bush environment with uneven ground, tree roots, low branches, and varying terrain. While risks are inherent in outdoor activities, these are actively managed through careful supervision, established routes, pre-activity inspections, and ongoing risk assessment.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors or Group Leaders - Lead and manage the activity safely - Conduct risk assessments and make go/no-go decisions - Deliver safety briefings - Inspect the trail before use - Coordinate emergency response if required - Ensure the activity is delivered in accordance with AOEC procedures.

(Where the activity is group-led, the Group Leader assumes responsibility for participant health and safety.)

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain duty of care for students at all times - Actively supervise assigned areas of the trail - Follow all safety procedures and instructor directions - Monitor participant behaviour and wellbeing - Assist with emergency response if required

Participants - Follow all instructions - Wear appropriate clothing and footwear - Remain on the guide rope at all times - Disclose relevant medical or behavioural conditions - Respect the environment and other participants.

5. Instructor Requirements

- The activity must be supervised by a competent AOEC instructor or designated Group Leader familiar with the course and emergency procedures.
 - A Risk Assessment and Management System (RAMS) supports this activity.
 - Risk Management Workshops are held on a regular basis for all instructors.
 - Group leaders should:
 - Understand the objectives of the activity.
 - Inspect the trail before each session. Identify and manage hazards.
 - Carry a first aid kit.
 - Ensure supervising adults understand their responsibilities.
 - Maintain participant numbers throughout the activity.
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6. Ratios

- Minimum supervision requirements: One competent activity leader.
 - Supervising adult: Supervising adults positioned throughout the course. Minimum of one supervising adult at the start of the trail. Minimum of one supervising adult at the finish of the trail. Additional supervising adults positioned at more challenging sections.
 - Ratios may be increased depending on participant age, confidence, group size, environmental conditions, or additional support requirements.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- All participants and caregivers must have completed Risk Disclosure documentation before participating.
- Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs, and mobility considerations must be identified.
- A responsible adult must be assigned for participants requiring medication

7.2 Equipment Checks

The activity leader must ensure the group carries - First aid kit - Torches for supervising adults - Blindfolds (if required)

The guide rope and trail must be inspected before each session.

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Closed-toe footwear - Clothing appropriate for weather conditions - Hair should be tied back where appropriate.

Participants should use the bathroom before the activity.

ENSURE participants bring their personal medication with them, and that there is someone present (adult supervisor) who knows how to administer it

7.4 Other Requirements

Before the activity:

- Walk the trail with supervising adults - Identify hazards - Position supervising adults before participants begin.
- Count all participants.

8. Environmental & Weather Assessment (Go/No-Go Criteria)

The activity must not proceed if:

- Severe weather increases risk.
- Strong winds create hazards from falling branches.
- Heavy rain makes the track unsafe.
- The trail cannot be adequately supervised

Guiding principle: If in doubt, stop the activity.

Instructors or Group Leaders must:

- Inspect the trail before each session.
- Continuously monitor conditions.
- Modify or cancel the activity if conditions deteriorate.

9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- Objectives of the activity
- Staying on the guide rope. Safe movement along the trail.
- Behaviour expectations.
- What to do at the end of the course.

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Supervising adults remain at designated positions.
- Participants remain on the guide rope.
- Participant numbers are monitored throughout the activity.
- The environment is protected by keeping participants on established paths.
- Activity must be stopped if safety is compromised.

11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Activity Leader takes control of situation
 - First aid is administered by trained person
 - Emergency services contacted via 111 if required and a designated person meets emergency services at access point.
 - AOEC Management contacted as soon as practical.
 - Group managed and kept safe by supervising adults
 - All participants are accounted for before leaving the activity area.
 - All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.
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12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Remain on the established trail.
- Avoid damaging vegetation, seedlings, and trees.
- Leave no Trace. Leave the course as it was found.
- Report any damage to the guide rope or course to AOEC Management.
- Respect nature and its wildlife. No harming any creatures like spiders or wetas.

Burma Trail - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan	Date: 03/08/2026	Next Review Date: 03/08/2027		
	Risk Rating System: Likelihood (1–5) x Consequence (1–5): 1–5 Low - 6–10 Moderate - 11–15 High				
	What would cause someone to get hurt?	What could happen?	Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
People	• Group Leaders/Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Loss of mana • Lost in the bush • Boredom/Frustration	8	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarisethemselves with Activity Instructions, • Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/ activity commencement.	4
	• Poorly understood objectives	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Loss of mana	6	• Good Communication Make it clear to Group leader and supporting adults that the objective is to get students comfortable with the darkness	2
	• Poor Instructions/Briefing	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Lost in the bush	6	• Good Communication • Go through the Burma trail with the group leader and supporting adults during daylight, highlighting risks and hazards. Ensure all students are accounted for at the end of activity.	2
	• Lack of Support	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to environment	5	• Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities.	2
	• Unruly Behaviour	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Frustration • Damage to environment	7	• Good leadership and control • Remove participants from activity if not following instructions	4
	• Special Needs not identified	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Lost in the bush • Loss of mana	6	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Ensure there is a knowledgeable adult able to deal with that condition/issue.	2
	• Student/Group Leader/Supervising Adult becomes incapacitated (Injury, heart attack, asthma, etc)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Ensure there is a knowledgeable adult able to deal with that condition/issue. • Other adults in group must know what to do in an emergency. • Emergency Action Plan	4
	• Environment Care Code not practice	Damage to the Environment	5	• Navigate on rope only. Support people need to carry a torch and stay put during the activity, no running through the bush.	6
Equipment	• Poor Clothing & Footwear	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia	8	• At the beginning ensure that everyone in group (students and adults) are wearing appropriate clothing and foot ware. Must wear covered shoes, dress for the conditions.	2
	• Damaged line/overuse of line	• Loss of Process • Lost in the bush	6	• Check Line/course in day light and again before use with torch	2
	• No Safety Equipment (Torches)	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Lost in the bush • Loss of mana • Frustration	4	• Ensure supervisors have working torches	1
	• No first aid kit on site	• Major injury • Minor Injury	8	• Ensure First Aid kit is on site	4
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Loss of process	10	• Cancel if necessary, the Group Leader will make this call • Halt the activity if necessary	6
	• Ground steep, slippery & wet	• Minor injury • Major Injury • Damage to the environment	8	• Wear close-toe shoes • Walking only	4
	• Trenches	• Major injury • Minor Injury	9	• Place supervisors in strategic places to assist or lighten tricky parts of the trail	3
	• Exposed tree roots	• Minor Injury • Major injury • Damage to the environment	5	• Wear close-toe shoes • Walking only • Remove if necessary and needed or move Burma line to avoid.	3
	• Repetitive use of site	• Damage to the environment	5	• Burma trail doesn't get moved so more forest isn't damaged	5

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	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
	Fallen, loose and low branches	- Major injury - Minor Injury	8	Check Line/course in day light and again before use with torch, remove debris out of the	4

Emergency Plan	First Aid	Medical Treatment	Serious Injury
	Who is the trained and nominated First Aider	Follow Emergency Action Plan Discussed at Pre Activity Safety Talk and at Safety Stations	See Emergency Action Plan discussed at Safety Talks and at Safety Stations
	First Aid Kit - Instructors have this	- Katikati Medical Centre 07 549 0411 4 Clive Road, Katikati	Call 111 or activate PLB
	Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults and knowledgeable person to deal with it	- Tauranga Hospital, Cameron Road, Tauranga 07 579 8000	Nominate someone to meet Emergency Services at Gate
	Incident & Accident Reporting	- Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	- Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station