



Bush Walks, Tramps & Hikes

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of Bush Walks, Tramps and Hikes from Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre (AOEC) to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are provided with a safe, enjoyable and well-supervised experience.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, group leaders, supervising adults and participants involved in bush walks, tramps and hikes departing from Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre.

3. Description of Activity

AOEC provides access to a range of bush tracks through regenerating native forest, including options suitable for short nature walks through to longer and more challenging walks.

The tracks include forest terrain, uneven surfaces, stream and river crossings, slippery surfaces and changing weather conditions. The level of difficulty and environmental exposure will vary depending on the route selected, weather conditions and capabilities of the group.

Walks may be instructor-led or, where approved, led by the visiting group under the responsibility of the Group Leader.

The Group Leader and supervising adults must ensure the selected route is appropriate for the age, experience, fitness, confidence and additional support requirements of the group.

4. Available Tracks

Nature Trail

Approximately 15 minutes return - 640 metres - Loop track starting and finishing near the Education Centre - Suitable for a short introductory nature walk

Aongatete Short Loop Track

Approximately 1 hour return - 2.2 km - Shares part of the northern section of the Long Loop Track - Includes a connecting section between the loop tracks

Aongatete Long Loop Track

Approximately 3.5 hours return - 6.4 km - Includes a mixture of gentle and uneven terrain - The western section includes three stream crossings - Stream crossings may require participants to get their feet wet depending on conditions

Track to Swimming Holes and River Access

Approximately 30 minutes one way - 475 metres - Provides access to the Aongatete River

The river area may be suitable for environmental studies and supervised activities such as dam building, craft boat activities and river stone construction

The final section of the track to the river may become slippery in damp conditions

North/South Track Access

The Aongatete Link Track provides access to the North/South Track along the Kaimai Range.

The North/South Track junction is approximately one hour from the lodge and requires a river crossing.

Longer walks from this area, including routes towards Thompsons Track or Wairere Falls, require additional planning, appropriate experience, suitable equipment and a completed RAMS specific to the proposed route and group.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

- Leader in charge (Group or AOEC Staff) must be familiar with: the walking route - Outdoor Safety Code principles - Basic bush navigation - Risk Assessment and Management Systems (RAMS).
 - The Leader should:
 - Complete a RAMS appropriate for the planned walk.
 - Monitor weather conditions before and during the activity. Monitor the river conditions - if in doubt, stay out.
 - Ensure at least one trained first aider is present.
 - Be familiar with participants' medical requirements.
 - Ensure participants have appropriate clothes, food and water.
 - Stop at each junction to ensure a head count and that the group is all going the correct way.
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6. Ratios

- Supervision ratios should reflect: Participants age - Group size - Experience - Behavioural or medical needs - Environmental conditions.
- Recommend 1 adult to supervise small group of 4-5 Children.

Additional supervising adults should be provided where necessary to maintain effective supervision throughout the walk.

7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs, allergies, and mobility considerations must be identified.

A responsible adult must be assigned to participants requiring medication.

7.2 Equipment Checks

Before departure, the responsible leader must check that required equipment is available and suitable.

- First aid Kit
- Communication device (PLB where required)
- Emergency blanket - Torch - Whistle
- Emergency food and drinking water.
- Warm clothing, including a beanie and a rain jacket.

Equipment must be checked before departure and carried by the designated responsible adult.

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Fully enclosed footwear (no bare feet, jandals, or sandals) - Suitable clothing for weather conditions - Rain Jacket - Sun hat during hot weather - Warm clothing and beanie during cold weather - Sunscreen - Insect repellent (recommended) - Water bottle.

Participants should use the bathroom before departure. Ensure participants bring required personal medication, with a responsible adult available to administer it if necessary.

7.4 Other Requirements

- Count all participants.
- Confirm the planned route, assigned groups, and confirm estimated return time.
- Check current weather conditions

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

The activity must not proceed if:

- Severe weather presents an unacceptable risk.
- High winds create hazards from falling branches.
- Flooding or storm damage affects the track or rivers.
- Group capability is unsuitable for the planned route.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, do not proceed.

The Group Leader must:

- Assess weather conditions before departure
- Continuously monitor changing conditions.
- Modify, postpone, or cancel the activity if safety is compromised.

9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- The planned route. Staying on marked tracks with your group. Stopping at junctions for head counts.
- Walking safely on uneven terrain.
- River and stream crossing procedures.
- Environmental care expectations.
- Emergency procedures.
- What to do if separated from the group.
- Behaviour expectations.

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Group Leaders maintain regular head counts.
 - Supervising adults monitor assigned participants.
 - Participants remain on marked tracks at all times.
 - Rest stops are taken where required.
 - The pace is adjusted to suit the slowest participant.
 - The activity must be stopped, shortened or rerouted if safety is compromised.
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11. Emergency Response (Summary)

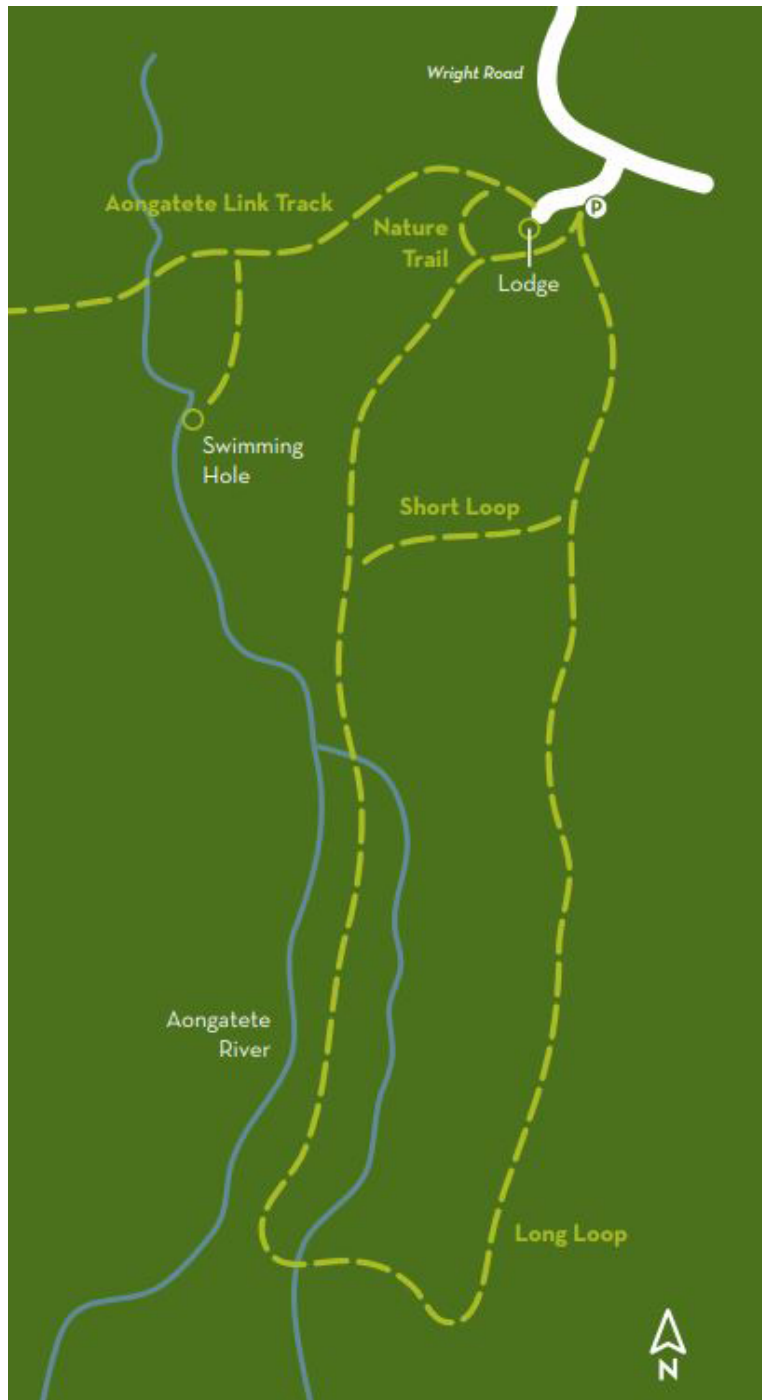
In the event of an incident:

- Group Leader takes control of the situation.
- First aid is administered by trained person
- Emergency services contacted via 111 if required. Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) activated if necessary. Designated person meets emergency services if required.
- AOEC Management is notified.
- Remaining participants are supervised in a safe location.

All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.

12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Stay on marked tracks identified by orange DOC markers.
- Avoid damaging vegetation, seedlings, and tree roots. Do not climb trees or remove plants, branches, or natural objects.
- Leave no Trace. Take all rubbish and personal belongings away from the forest.
- Avoid damaging vegetation or surrounding facilities.
- Respect nature and its wildlife.



Further information about Outdoor Safety

The Get Outdoors Series is a 29 part 'how-to' series that is aimed at helping beginners learn about correctly preparing for trips into the outdoors. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeLnplTcbKodTaLnO-53RmTNSCUHjIxa>

Learn to keep yourself and our group safe: <https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/>

For the latest weather forecast and weather alerts and warnings: https://www.metservice.com/national?gclid=CjwKCAjwiOv7BRBREiwAXHbv3JkB_RSeH3R_upbNf9rl3WqZ4ILwgpoq9S0-DdNtbWJbR1aYfRKNRoCgc0QAvD_BwE

Bush Walks - 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	- Death - Major Injury - Minor Injury - Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Loss of process - Loss of mana - Frustration/poor decision making - Lost in the bush - Damage to the environment	10	Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with area, Outdoor safety code, environment code, responsibility & RAMS prior to camp/activity commencement.	4
	Bad Planning Outdoor Safety Code not practiced Environment Care Code not practiced Trail not suitable for groups ability/time	- Death - Major Injury - Minor Injury - Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Loss of process - Loss of mana - Frustration/poor decision making - Lost in the bush - Damage to the environment	8	- Follow the Outdoor Safety Code: 1) Plan your trip, 2) Know everyone's limits 3)Check the weather conditions 4) Leave a note at lodge of where you are going and when you expect to be back 5)Take sufficient supplies - Stay on the trail, do not step or pull on plants - Match Groups ability to the right trail - Have an emergency action plan	2
	Poor instructions/communication	- Major injury - Minor Injury - Damage to Environment - Lost individuals/group in the bush - Loss of Process	9	- Go through safety guidelines, hazards, what to expect, what happens when things go wrong, before you start walking. - Have a plan, know what trail you are following, have a tail-end adult, stop at trail forks to ensure the whole group is going the right way.	3
	Lost eg; Party going off track, Going on the wrong track Splitting up in different directions	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Physical Well-being (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Loss of process	6	- Stay on track, follow only orange markers, head count and roll call to ensure you have everyone - If lost STOP - Use whistle/phone/radio - Activate PLB only in life threatening situation	4
	Special Needs not identified	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Loss of process - Frustration - Not enough support	8	- Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities. - Adjust plan if need, eg. Change to Short loop/ Nature Trail. Ensure the whole groups is aware of any changes made.	3
	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. Who is the nominated knowledgeable person to deal with known medical/behavioural issues - Other Adults in Group must know what to do in an emergency - Bring any medication that may be needed.	8
	Equipment	Poor Clothing & Footwear	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia - Loss of process	8	Before leaving, check that everyone in group (students and adults) are wearing appropriate clothing and foot ware. Must wear covered shoes, dress for the conditions.
No adequate wet weather gear		- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia	8	Check for wet weather gear, take emergency rain ponchos and extra warm layer	3
No or Insufficient Equipment (emergency food & drink, first aid, extra warm layers, communication device)		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia	9	Bring sufficient supplies	3
No map		Lost of group or individuals in bush	4	Make sure to have suitable map and follow signs	1

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	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
	No alert equipment ie whistle, PLB	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia - Lost in the bush	10	Take a whistle and a PLB(PLBs can be hired from AOEC Management and most hunting & Fishing shops)	6
Environment	Weather unsuitable for session	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia) - Loss of process	12	- Check latest weather forecast - watch for unexpected changes in weather and route conditions - Bring sufficient supplies - Cancel or change activities if weather isn't safe	6
	River to swift, high or cold	- Death - Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia	12	Stay out of river, do not attempt to cross if its too high or swift, return the way you came or wait until river is safe to cross.	3
	Tree falls, rock falls or slips on track	- Minor Injury - Major injury - Death	8	- Halt group when assessing rock/tree fall or slips. - Cancel activity in high winds	5
	Track changed or closed	- Loss of process - Lost in bush	3	Check track conditions with AOEC Management/ DOC before starting	1
	Track unsuitable for group	- Exhaustion - Loss of Mana - Loss of process	4	Research or check out the track assessing the difficulties.	2

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