



Candle Trail

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning, supervision, and delivery of the Candle Trail activity to ensure risks are effectively managed while providing participants with a positive and confidence-building outdoor experience.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, group leaders, supervising adults, and participants involved in the Candle Trail activity.

3. Description of Activity

The Candle Trail is a low-risk, night-time activity designed to develop confidence, resilience, self-awareness, and appreciation of the natural environment after dark.

Participants navigate a marked trail using the light of battery-operated candles placed along the route. The activity encourages participants to step outside their comfort zone in a controlled environment while relying on their senses, judgement, and confidence.

The activity is intended to be completed quietly, allowing participants to experience the natural sounds and atmosphere of the forest. Scaring or deliberately frightening participants is not permitted, as this is contrary to the educational objectives of the activity.

The Candle Trail takes place on established walking tracks within the AOEC forest environment. While risks are low, hazards such as uneven ground, roots, branches, slips, trips, and limited visibility are managed through careful planning, appropriate supervision, and ongoing monitoring throughout the activity.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Staff- Provide guidance on suitable Candle Trail routes - Brief group leaders on safe operation of the activity - Maintain activity resources where applicable - Provide assistance during emergencies if required.

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain responsibility for participant health and safety when leading the activity independently - Conduct a pre-activity hazard assessment - Ensure adequate supervision throughout the activity - Deliver the participant safety briefing - Carry appropriate emergency equipment - Manage emergency response if required

Participants - Follow all instructions - Stay on the marked trail and walk at all times - Respect the environment and other participants - Report any concerns or injuries immediately.

5. Group Leaders Requirements

- Understand the objectives of the Candle Trail
- Be familiar with the selected route. Walk the route during daylight before conducting the activity.
- Identify hazards and allocate supervisors to higher-risk locations.
- Understand emergency procedures and carry or have immediate access to a first aid kit.
- Ensure supervising adults understand their responsibilities.

Risk Management Workshops are held regularly for AOEC instructors. A Risk Assessment and Management System (RAMS) is maintained for AOEC activities. Groups leading their own activity are encouraged to complete their own risk assessment.

6. Ratios

- Supervising adults should be positioned throughout the trail to maintain participant safety.
 - Additional supervisors should be placed at difficult or higher-risk sections of the track.
 - At least one supervising adult must remain at the finish until every participant has completed the activity and has been accounted for.
 - Ratios may be increased depending on participant age, ability, or group needs.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural considerations, and relevant fitness concerns must be identified before the activity.
- Participants requiring medication must carry it with them, and a responsible adult must be present who knows how to administer it.

7.2 Equipment Checks

The group leader must ensure the group has:- Access to a First aid kit - Battery-operated candles and spare batteries (loaned) - Working torch for each supervising adult

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Closed-toe footwear suitable for walking - Clothing appropriate for weather conditions

Supervising Adults should:- Dress warmly - Carry a working torch

7.4 Route Preparation (Before the activity)

- Walk the selected route during daylight. Identify hazards.
- Position battery-operated candles so each marker is visible from the previous one. Clearly mark significant hazards.
- Position supervising adults at regular intervals and at challenging locations.

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

The activity must not proceed if:

- Weather conditions create an unacceptable level of risk (e.g. strong winds, heavy rain, thunderstorms).
- The trail is unsafe due to fallen trees, flooding, slips, or other hazards.
- Visibility or environmental conditions prevent safe supervision.
- Adequate supervision cannot be provided.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, postpone or cancel.

9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- Objectives of the activity and behaviour expectations.
- No Running, stay on the marked trail.
- What to do if they become lost or separated.
- What to do upon reaching the finish.
- Respect for the environment and other participants.

Supervising adults must be present during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Supervising adults remain at their allocated locations.
 - Supervisors must never intentionally frighten participants.
 - Supervisors should not run through the forest except in an emergency.
 - Participants are accounted for before the activity begins and again at its conclusion.
 - Battery-operated candles are collected, checked, and stored after use.
 - Missing or damaged equipment must be reported to AOEC management.
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11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- The group leader takes control of the situation.
 - First aid is administered by trained person
 - Emergency services contacted via 111 if required
 - AOEC Management is notified as soon as possible.
 - Remaining participants are gathered in a safe location.
 - Designated person meets emergency services at access point
 - All incidents and near misses must be recorded in the Group Occupancy & Safety Log located at the Lodge Kitchen Safety Station.
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12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Remain on established tracks.
- Avoid damaging vegetation or disturbing wildlife. Avoid standing on seedlings or breaking branches.
- Leave no Trace. Everything we take to the forest must be removed and disposed of properly back at camp, including food/scraps, footwear and clothing.
- Remove all activity equipment at the completion of the session.
- Respect the natural environment at all times.

Candle Trail - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan		Date: 31/07/2026		Next Review Date: 31/07/2027		
	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 • Physical Wellbeing (cold, hot, wet) • Damage to Environment • Loss of mana • Lost in the bush • Boredom/Frustration		8	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Activity Instructions, Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/ activity commencement.	4
	• Bad Planning		• Major injury • Minor Injury • Lost in the bush • Loss of mana • Damage to the Environment		6	• Walk the course in the daylight with supporting adults, adjust the activity to suit the groups ability.	2
	• Poor Instructions/Briefing		• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Lost in the bush		6	• Go through the Candle trail with the group leader and supporting adults during daylight, highlighting risks and hazards.	2
	• Lack of Support		• Major injury • Minor Injury		5	• Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities.	2
	• Waiting time & Fear of dark		• Loss of mana • Frustration/fear • Damage to environment		7	• Support participants, allow them to walk with a friend if needed. Keep group calm during waiting time. No scaring in this activity.	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 by trail 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
	• Candles lights not working		• Loss of Process • Lost in the bush		6	• Check lights before activity	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		• 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
	• Exposed tree roots		• Minor Injury • Major injury • Damage to the environment		5	• Wear close-toe shoes • Walking only	3
	• Repetitive use of site		• Damage to the environment		5	• Stay on existing trails only	5
	• Fallen, loose and low branches		• Major injury • Minor Injury		8	• Check course in day light and again before use with torch, remove debris out of the way	4

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	Hazards/Harm		Risk		Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?
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	
			• Report to AOEC Management		• Report to AOEC Management	
	• Incident & Accident Reporting		• Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station		• Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	