

Challenge Course

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)



1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning, supervision, and operation of the AOEC Challenge Course to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are supported throughout the activity.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, supervising adults, and participants involved in Challenge Course activities.

3. Description of Activity

The AOEC Challenge Course is an instructor or adult-supervised team building activity designed to promote personal growth, confidence, communication, problem solving, and adventure-based learning.

The course consists of a series of low-level challenge elements that require participants to work together while navigating physical obstacles in a controlled environment. Activities are designed to encourage teamwork, trust, leadership, and resilience while developing balance, coordination, and decision-making skills.

The Challenge Course is not a playground and must only be used as a structured, supervised activity. Free play is strictly prohibited.

Although the course is designed to minimise risk, participation involves inherent hazards including falls, strains, slips, trips, and impacts. These risks are actively managed through appropriate supervision, participant briefings, established safety procedures, and ongoing monitoring throughout the activity.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Staff - Ensure the Challenge Course is safe for use - Conduct routine safety inspections and random safety checks - Provide activity guidance where required - Halt the activity immediately if safety is compromised - Coordinate emergency response if required

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain duty of care for students at all times - Actively supervise assigned students (4-5 participants each) - Provide continuous 1:1 spotting during activities - Ensure participants follow all Challenge Course rules - Be familiar with the safety requirements for each challenge element - Assist with emergency response if required.

Participants - Follow all instructions - Wear required clothing and footwear - Use each challenge element safely and responsibly - read the instructions by each section. Respect other participants and avoid unsafe behaviour.

5. Supervisor Requirements

- Challenge Course activities require competent adult supervision at all times.
- Supervisors must be familiar with:
 - Understand the inherent risks of the Challenge Course.
 - Be familiar with the safety instructions displayed on each element.
 - Provide continuous 1:1 spotting. Position themselves to effectively observe and support their assigned participant.
 - Remain actively engaged throughout the activity. Behave professionally at all times.
 - Risk management systems (RAMS)

Random safety checks may be conducted by AOEC staff throughout the activity.

6. Ratios

- Maximum supervision ratio: 1 supervising adult to 4–5 participants
 - Continuous 1:1 spotting is required while participants are using any challenge element.
 - Ratios may be increased where participant age, ability, or behaviour requires additional supervision.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- All participants and their caregivers must have completed AOEC Risk Disclosure documentation before participation.
- Relevant medical conditions, injuries, behavioural considerations, and physical limitations must be identified before the activity begins.

7.2 Equipment Checks

Before use, supervising adults must ensure: - Access to a First aid kit if needed - The Challenge Course has no obvious damage - Safety signage is visible - Landing areas are clear - Gates are unlocked only during authorised activities - Gates are locked immediately after use.

AOEC staff may conduct additional safety inspections

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Covered footwear suitable for outdoor activity - Comfortable clothing that allows unrestricted movement - Clothing free from loose items that could catch on equipment - Jewellery and loose items should be removed where practical.

7.4 Other Requirements

- Participants receive a safety briefing and participants understand spotting procedures.
 - Participants understand behaviour expectations.
 - Participants must not participate while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
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8. Environmental & Weather Assessment (Go/No-Go Criteria)

The activity must not proceed if:

- Structural damage is identified
- The course has not been inspected following severe weather or another event that may have affected its safety.
- Environmental conditions create unacceptable risk (e.g. high winds, lightning, or other hazardous weather).
- Adequate supervision cannot be provided.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, do not use the Challenge Course.

AOEC staff reserve the right to suspend or cancel activities whenever safety is compromised.

9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- Safe use of each challenge element.
- 1:1 spotting procedures.
- Behaviour expectations - No pushing, bouncing, swinging, or rough behaviour.
- One participant per challenge element at any time.
- Communication between participants and supervisors.
- Emergency procedures

Supervising adults must be present and actively engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Continuous 1:1 spotting is maintained.
 - Only one participant is permitted on each challenge element at any one time. Platforms are included in this limit.
 - The tower deck may accommodate a maximum of 6–8 people at one time.
 - Participants must not push, bounce, or intentionally swing challenge elements. Unsafe or inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated.
 - Supervisors remain focused on participants and do not leave their assigned supervision area.
 - AOEC staff may stop the activity immediately if safety standards are not maintained.
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11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Supervising adults immediately stop the activity.
 - First aid is administered by trained person
 - Emergency services contacted via 111 if required
 - AOEC Management is notified as soon as practicable.
 - Remaining participants are moved to 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 and reported to AOEC management.
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12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Respect the Challenge Course facilities.
- Leave equipment and structures undamaged.
- Keep gates closed and locked when the course is not in use.
- Never climb over the fence or locked gate.
- Report any damage or maintenance concerns immediately.

Unauthorised access to the Challenge Course, including climbing over the fence or locked gate, may result in a NZ\$100 deduction from the group's security deposit and activation of the site alarm.

Challenge Course

INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS SAFETY PRECAUTIONS



P1- P10 - Platforms

- Only 3 persons are permitted on any platforms at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Be aware the platforms may be slippery when wet.
- Be aware of location of the structure with regard to head height.
- Be aware of incoming users on adjacent elements.

1 - Rock Wall

- Only 2 persons are permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- When dismounting at the top, climb all the way to the top first.
- Do not descend by this element. Descend via the Climbing Rope, Fire Pole, Tyres, Multi Vine, or Wire Rope Ladder.
- Do not interfere with the users.
- 3 persons on the deck at a time.

2 and 3 - Open and Closed Tyre Climbs

- Only 1 person is permitted on these elements at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet, both on the apparatus and on the deck.
- When dismounting at the top, climb all the way to the top first.
- Watch the position of the feet and the fingers.
- Do not interfere with the user.
- 3 persons on the deck at a time

4 - Rock Post

- Only 1 person is permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet, both on the apparatus and on the deck.
- When dismounting at the top, climb all the way to the top first.
- Watch the position of the feet and the fingers.
- Do not interfere with the user.
- Do not descend by this element. Descend via the Climbing Rope, Fire Pole, Tyres, Multi Vine, or Wire Rope Ladder.

5 - Deck

- Only 3 persons are permitted on any platforms at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Be aware the platforms may be slippery when wet.
- Users should not prevent anyone from climbing onto the deck from any of the adjacent elements.
- Users should not chase anyone around the deck.
- Users should not push anyone from the deck.
- Common sense should be used at all times by those on the deck.

6 - Wall Climb 3 Rope

- Only 2 persons are permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet, both on the apparatus and on the deck.
- When dismounting at the top, climb all the way to the top first.
- Watch the position of the feet and the fingers.
- Do not interfere with the user.
- Do not shake the rope while it is in use.
- Do not descend by this element. Descend via the Climbing Rope, Fire Pole, Tyres, Multi Vine, or Wire Rope Ladder.
- 3 persons on the deck at a time

7 - Climbing Rope

- Only 1 person is permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- When starting from the top, mount from a sitting position.
- When dismounting, climb all the way to the top first.
- Do not interfere with the user.
- 3 persons on the deck at a time.

8 - Fire Pole

- Only 1 person is permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- When starting from the top, mount from a sitting position.
- When dismounting, climb all the way to the top first.
- Do not interfere with the user.

9 - Wire Rope Ladder

- Only 1 person is permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- When dismounting at the top, climb all the way to the top first.
- When climbing, put your hands on the vertical cables, not the horizontal rungs.
- Do not interfere with the user.
- 3 persons on the deck at a time.

10 - Multi Vine

- Only 3 persons (staggered start) are permitted on this element at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Use the vines (chains).
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- Do not shake while others are using this element.

11 - Log Stepper/Swing Bridge

- Only 3 persons (staggered start) are permitted on this element at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Try to step on the supports.
- Use the support chains for balance.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- Do not shake while others are using this element.

12 - Gym Rings

- Only 1 person is permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- Take off from a sitting position.
- Do not interfere with the user.

13 - Sky Walker

- Only 1 person is permitted on this apparatus at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- Take off from a sitting position.
- No pushing when on the apparatus.
- Be aware of the metal structure while mounting and dismounting the apparatus.
- No interfering with the user.
- Do not to slam the carts against the buffers. This will result in breakage of equipment.

14 - Postman's Walks

- Ensure there are no more than three pupils on the event at one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Use the support cables when attempting this element unless specific alterations/ goals are made by the supervisor with the appropriate spotting techniques employed.
- Spectators must not shake while there is a user on this element.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.

15 - Tyre Traverse

- A maximum of 3 persons at any time.
- No swinging of tyres while on this element.
- Be aware of jamming fingers and knocking heads on the metal structures.

16 - Ring Swing

- Only 2 persons are permitted on this element at any one time.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.
- No spinning one another while on the ring swing.
- Be aware of the metal structure while mounting and dismounting the apparatus.

17 - Burmese Bridge

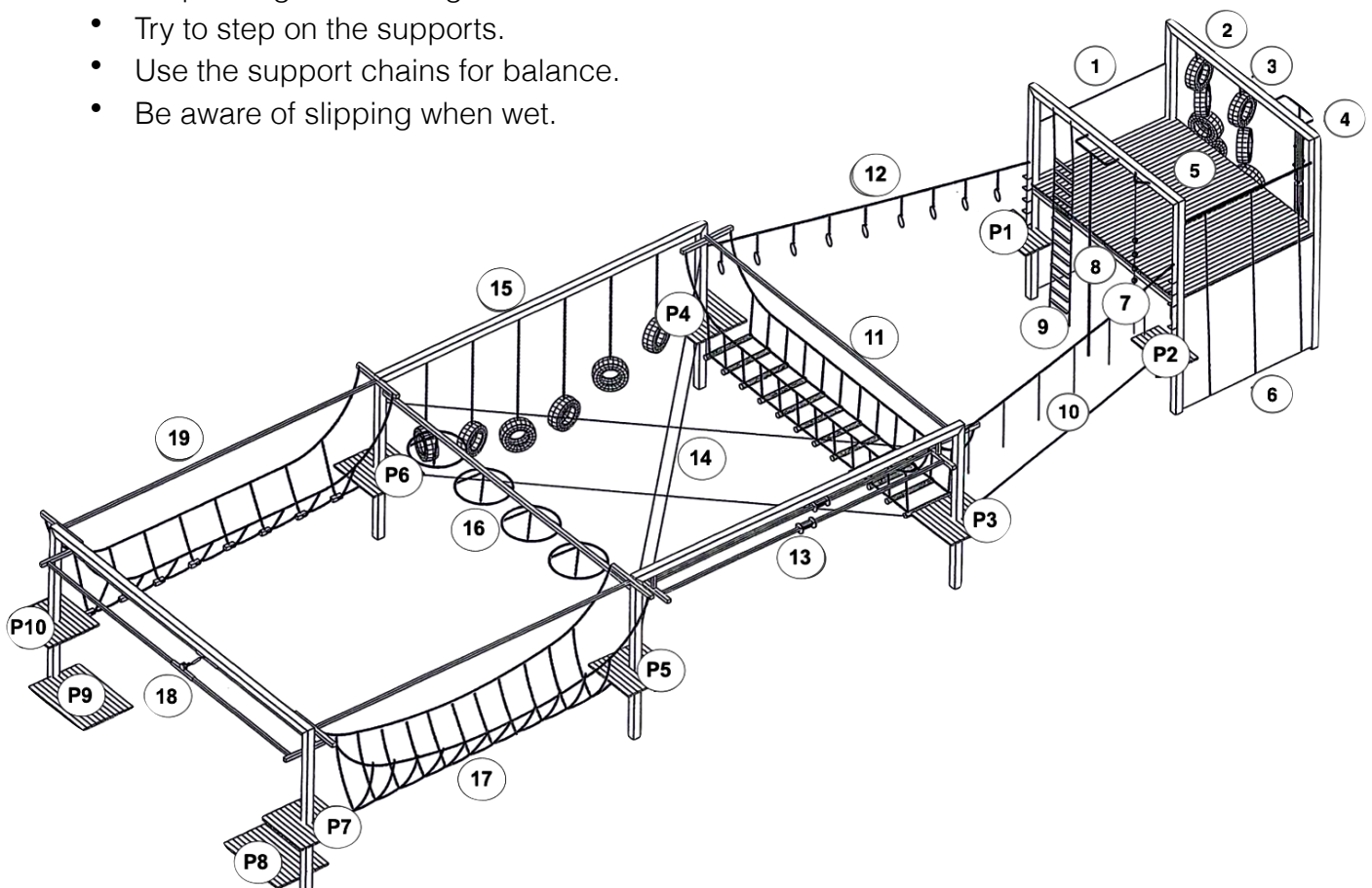
- Only 3 persons (staggered start) are permitted on this element at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Try to step on the supports.
- Use the support chains for balance.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.

18 - Crank Wheel

- Maximum of one person on this element at a time.
- Grip the crank wheel handles in the middle to avoid jamming fingers.
- Start from the platform and be aware of the structure.
- No pushing when on the element.
- No interfering with the user.

19 - Block Stepper

- Only 3 persons (staggered start) are permitted on this element at any one time.
- No pushing or bouncing.
- Try to step on the supports.
- Use the support chains for balance.
- Be aware of slipping when wet.



Challenge Course – Risk Disclosure



Understanding the Risks

We acknowledge that participating in the Challenge Course involves inherent risks, including but not limited to: - Falls from challenge elements - Slips, trips, and impacts - Sprains, strains, and other physical injuries - Risks associated with heights on elevated platforms - The potential for serious injury or death.

We understand these risks cannot be completely eliminated.

Medical & Fitness Declaration

We confirm that: - we have disclosed all relevant medical conditions, injuries, medications, and behavioural considerations - all participants (students & adults) are physically and mentally able to participate in this activity. We will inform staff of any changes prior to participation.

All participants have consented to receive medical treatment deemed necessary in an emergency.

Participant Responsibilities

We agree to: - Follow all instructions provided by AOEC staff and supervising adults - Wear appropriate clothing and footwear - Act responsibly and not endanger themselves or others - Respect Challenge Course rules and supervision requirements.

We understand that failure to follow instructions may result in removal from the activity.

Acknowledgement of Risk

We confirm that: - We understand the nature of the activity and associated risks - we have had the opportunity to ask questions - We are aware that everyone voluntarily choose to participate.

Liability

We understand that, to the extent permitted by law, AOEC is not liable for injury, loss, or damage arising from risks inherent in the activity, particularly where participants fail to follow instructions or safety requirements.

Additional Conditions

- We agree to care for any equipment provided and accept responsibility for damage caused by misuse
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Challenge Course – Risk Disclosure (continued)

Risk Disclosure Documentation

All adult participants, and the parents/caregivers of participating students, have signed the risk disclosure document, confirmed they have read the activity overview and risk management summary, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

In addition, the school is required to complete and return a Risk Disclosure and Emergency Management Summary document. This document includes a full list of all participants (adults and students), relevant medical information, behavioural considerations, and any injuries. It also records confirmation, by way of a checklist against each participant's name, that signed risk disclosures and activity overview documents have been received.

Consent

Name of Teacher in Charge

Signature: _____.

Date: _____

Name of Principal/Member of BOT

Position _____

Signature: _____.

Date: _____

Challenge Course - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustees - Nisha Duncan	Date: 30/08/2026	Next Review Date: 30/08/2027		
	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	• Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks i.e. not enforcing the safety rules	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment • Boredom/Frustration	8	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Activity Instructions, Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/ activity commencement. AOEC Staff will halt this activity if risks are not taken seriously	4
	• Not sufficient Supervision/Poor Supervision	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment	6	• Sufficient competent hands on adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities.	2
	• Lack of Support (Spotting)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• 1:1 Spotting is required Encourage group support and students spotting each other	2
	• Failure to disclose risks	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	6	• Group must be briefed on activity instructions, responsibilities, and RAMS before given the key to use the Challenge Course	2
	• Improper use of equipment	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Boredom/Frustration	9	• Group Leaders brief group extensively on safety & correct technique. Identify the main hazards of the activity with participants. Items can not be added to any sections on the challenge course eg. Ropes/planks	3
	• Participants not paying attention	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Passer-by Safety	9	• With adult hands on supervision and students engaged with supporting and spotting participants. Everyone should be paying attention. Halt activity if needed.	4
	• Bad behaviour	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	8	• Brief group on safe behaviour Stop activity and take any participants that are not following the rules off equipment	6
	• Inappropriate clothing and footwear	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	5	• Participants are not allowed on the Challenge Course without proper covered shoes. Dress for the weather conditions.	2
	• Special Needs not identified	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Frustration • Not enough support	6	• Disabilities must be discussed before or on arrival of camp. • Ensure extra adult support is met.	2
	• Overcrowding	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment • Passer-by Safety	5	• No more than 3 participants per section/ platform	2
	• Unauthorised Use	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	8	• Challenge Course is surrounded by a locked fence when not in use. Unauthorised use is an immediate \$100 deduction off groups deposit.	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	8
Equipment	• Improper use of equipment	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Passer-by Safety	9	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with instructions, responsibilities & RMAS prior to camp/activity commencement. No outside equipment eg; planks/ropes, can be added to the course.	3
	• Equipment wet/slippy	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Wait for equipment to dry, do not use in the rain.	2
	• Poor Maintenance System	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	12	• Challenge Course is checked monthly by AOEC Staff. • Challenge Course is inspected by Playground Inspectors bi yearly	6

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	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
	• Lack of wood chip in fall zone	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	8	• Challenge Course is monthly inspection include wood chip depth check to ensure levels at 30cm and above.	3
	• No first aid kit on site	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Ensure First Aid kit is on site	4
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session (Lighting/ Thunderstorm)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia)	6	• Cancel if necessary, the Group Leader will make this call. Halt the activity if necessary	3
	• Equipment slippery & wet	• Minor injury • Major Injury	6	• Do not use in the rain, wait for equipment to dry before using	2
	• Wasps	• Minor Injury • Major injury • Death	6	• Report any sightings of wasp, carry first aid kit and Wasp Spray	3

	First Aid	Medical Treatment	Serious Injury
Emergency Plan	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