



Environment Education Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of AOEC Environment Education activities to ensure risks are effectively managed while providing engaging, educational, and environmentally responsible learning experiences.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, supervising adults, group leaders, and participants involved in Environment Education activities.

3. Description of Activity

AOEC offers a range of instructor-led and teacher-led Environment Education programmes that encourage participants to explore, understand, and appreciate the natural environment while developing environmental awareness and stewardship.

Activities may include:

- **Get to Know a Tree** – Learning to identify native plants and trees.
- **Native Birds in our Forest** – Observing and identifying native bird species.
- **Layers of the Forest** – Exploring forest ecology and how ecosystems work together, with optional team-building extensions.
- **River Studies** – Investigating freshwater ecosystems by identifying aquatic invertebrates and learning about river health.
- **Pest Control & Conservation** – Understanding the impact of introduced pests, habitat loss, and conservation efforts.
- **Rongoā** – Learning about traditional Māori uses of native plants for healing and wellbeing.
- **Night Walk** – Exploring the forest after dark to observe glow worms, nocturnal wildlife, insects, and native birdlife. This activity begins approximately 20 minutes after sunset and is limited to a maximum of 15 participants, including supervising adults.
- **Waste Management – Mission Save the Planet** – A practical recycling and waste minimisation programme focusing on sustainable waste management. This activity is compulsory for school groups and is normally delivered on the first day of camp with a follow-up review at the end of the programme.

Sessions are generally delivered in 1½-hour blocks but may be adjusted to suit programme requirements and participant needs.

Activities occur within natural outdoor environments including native forest, walking tracks, rivers, and outdoor learning spaces. Risks are actively managed through experienced instructors, appropriate supervision, ongoing environmental assessment, and adherence to AOEC risk management procedures.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors or Group Leaders - Lead and manage the activity safely - Conduct risk assessments - Deliver safety briefings - Monitor participant wellbeing - Modify or cancel activities if conditions become unsafe - Coordinate emergency response if required.

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain duty of care for students throughout the activity - Attend the entire session, including the safety briefing - Actively supervise participants and assist students requiring additional support - Reinforce safety instructions and maintain discipline where necessary - Assist the instructor with range management and emergency response if required.

Participants - Follow all instructions - Wear appropriate clothing and footwear - Stay with the group - Report injuries or concerns immediately

5. Instructor Requirements

- Be familiar with each activity location.
- Understand activity-specific hazards
- Be trained in emergency procedures.
- Be familiar with AOEC Risk Assessment and Management Systems (RAMS).
- Participate in regular Risk Management Workshops.

Where groups lead activities independently, group leaders are encouraged to complete their own RAMS.

6. Ratios

- Preferred instructor ratio: 1 instructor to 12 participants
- Supervising Adults ratio: 1-2 supervising adult per instructor group.
- Night Walk Maximum 15 participants, including supervising group.

Ratios may be reduced depending on participant age, confidence, experience, or additional support requirements.

7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs, allergies, and fitness considerations must be disclosed prior to the activity.

Participants requiring medication (including EpiPens) must carry it, and a responsible adult must be present who knows how to administer it.

7.2 Equipment Checks

Instructor or group leader must ensure asset to: First aid kits - Communication device (radio and/or phone) - Drinking water - Emergency snacks - extra warm clothing - Participant medication whiner required.

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Fully enclosed footwear (no bare feet, jandals, or sandals) - Clothing appropriate for weather conditions - Waterproof jacket if required.

Participants should use the toilet before leaving for activities.

7.4 Environmental Assessment

- Assess track and environmental conditions
- Monitor weather forecasts. Assess river conditions for River Studies
- Identify any hazards along the planned route.

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

The activity must not proceed if:

- Weather conditions create an unacceptable level of risk.
- River levels are unsafe for River Studies.
- Walking tracks are unsafe due to slips, flooding, fallen trees, or other hazards.
- Adequate supervision cannot be maintained.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, do not proceed.

Environmental conditions must be monitored throughout each session.

9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Activity objectives. | • Emergency procedures. |
| • Identified hazards. | • What to do if separated from the group. |
| • Staying on designated tracks and environmental care expectations. | • Behaviour expectations. |

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Instructors monitor participant wellbeing.
- Participants remain on designated tracks unless instructed otherwise.
- Supervising adults actively supervise assigned participants.
- Participants are monitored for fatigue, weather exposure, and confidence.
- Activities are modified if participant ability or environmental conditions require.
- Activities are stopped immediately if safety is compromised.

11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Instructor takes control of situation
- First aid is administered by trained person
- Emergency services contacted via 111 if required
- AOEC Management is notified.
- Remaining participants are moved to a safe location.
- Designated person meets emergency services if required.

All incidents and near misses must be recorded in the Group Occupancy & Safety Log located at the Lodge Kitchen Safety Station.

12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Stay on designated tracks marked with orange trail markers.
- Avoid damaging native vegetation. Do not climb trees or stand on exposed roots. Do not remove leaves, branches, plants, rocks, or wildlife.
- Leave no Trace. Remove all rubbish before leaving.
- Respect nature and its wildlife.

Environment Education - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustees - 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 (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Loss of mana - Frustration/boredom - Lost in the bush - Damage to the environment		6	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		- Major Injury - Minor Injury - Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Lost in the bush - Damage to the environment		4	- Follow the Outdoor Safety Code - Stay on the trail, do not step or pull on plants - Match Groups ability to the right trail - Head count before, during and at the end of activity. Nominate a tail end Charlie. - Do not leave the group without letting the group leader/instructor know	2
	Poor instructions/communication		- Major Injury - Minor Injury - Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Lost in the bush - Damage to the environment		4	- Go through safety guidelines, hazards, what to expect. - 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
	Unruly Behaviour		- Loss of process - Damage to environment		4	Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues.	
	Allergic reaction		- Death - Major Injury - Minor Injury		10	- Know medical conditions 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 - Adjust activity to avoid contact with known allergies, eg. Peanut butter in traps, bees at the swing.	6
	- Lost eg; Party going off track, Going on the wrong track - Splitting up in different directions		- Major Injury - Minor Injury - Physical wellbeing (hypothermia/hyperthermia) - Damage to the environment		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		- Major Injury - Minor Injury - Loss of process - Frustration - Not enough support		6	- Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities. - Adjust plan if needed. 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		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia		6	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.	3
	No adequate wet weather gear		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Hypothermia/hyperthermia		6	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		6	Bring sufficient supplies	3
	Traps, bait and monitoring stations not used correctly		- Major injury - Minor Injury		8	- Best Practice use of traps, bait stations and monitoring tunnels - only trained instructors handling traps, wear gloves where needed - Call poison hotline if toxic bait is ingested immediately	3

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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
	• Touching of traps, lures and stuffed animals	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	8	• Only touch when asked, wash hands after activity. • Only trained instructors handling traps, wear gloves where needed • Call poison hotline if toxic bait is ingested immediately	3
	• Torch doesn't work/batteries die (Night Walk)	• Minor injury • Lost in the bush	3	• Check torch and batteries. • Always walk with the group, everyone should be carrying their own torch.	1
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia) • Loss of process • Damage to environment	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	5
	• River to swift, high or cold (River study)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia/hyperthermia	12	• Cancel or adjust activity as needed. 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.	5
	• Tree falls, rock falls or slips on track	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Halt group when assessing rock/tree fall or slips. • Cancel activity in high winds	5
	• Darkness (Night Walk)	• Minor injury • Lost in the bush • Loss of mana			
	• Wasps	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Be aware of wasps, ensure any participants with allergies are carry their medication. • Avoid wasps when aware and able	4
	• Uneven surface/tree roots/muddy	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Stay on track, no running, proper walking shoes	4
	• Poisonous fungi and plants	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Brief group not to touch or eat any unknown plants	2
	• 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