

Shelter Building Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)



1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Shelter Building activity to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are provided with a safe, enjoyable and well-supervised experience.

The activity is designed to develop creativity, teamwork and practical outdoor survival skills through the construction of temporary shelters using approved materials.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, Group Leaders, supervising adults and participants involved in the Shelter Building activity at Aongatete Outdoor Education Centre.

3. Description of Activity

Participants work individually or in small groups to construct temporary shelters or bivouacs using tarpaulins, ropes and approved natural materials provided within the designated activity area.

The activity encourages teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and practical outdoor skills.

Shelters are temporary and must be dismantled at the end of each session. All materials must be returned to the designated storage or collection area.

The activity takes place in a designated clear area on the Burma Trail, accessed via the Team Building area.

Participants must remain within the marked activity boundaries at all times.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Group Leader or where AOEC is leading the activity, the AOEC instructor is responsible for:

- Leading and managing the activity safely
- Conducting a risk assessment and making go/no-go decisions
- Delivering the mandatory safety briefing
- Clearly identifying activity boundaries
- Monitoring participant behaviour
- Ensuring appropriate use of equipment and materials
- Preventing damage to vegetation and the surrounding environment
- Managing any incidents or injuries

- Ensuring the activity area is left safe and tidy.
- Emergency procedures
- Relevant AOEC risk management systems and RAMS
- Reporting equipment damage or loss to AOEC Management

Supervising Adults

- Actively supervise participants
- Reinforce safety instructions and activity boundaries
- Assist participants where required
- Monitor safe use of branches, logs, ropes and tarpaulins
- Prevent unsafe behaviour
- Support environmental care and Leave No Trace requirements
- Report hazards, injuries or equipment damage to the responsible leader

Participants must:

- Follow all instructions from the instructor or Group Leader
- Remain within the designated activity boundaries
- Use only approved materials
- Handle equipment and materials safely
- Not climb trees or damage vegetation
- Not use branches or logs that are too large or heavy to safely handle
- Respect the surrounding environment
- Dismantle their shelter when instructed
- Return materials to the designated area
- Report injuries, hazards or damaged equipment to an adult

5. Ratios

- Supervision ratios should reflect: Participants age - Group size - Experience - Behavioural or medical needs - Environmental conditions.
- Recommend 2 adult to supervise group of 12 participants.

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

6. Pre-Activity Requirements

6.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

All participants and caregivers must complete the appropriate AOEC Risk Disclosure documentation before participating.

Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs, allergies, fitness considerations and any other factors that may affect participation must be disclosed.

Participants requiring medication must have it readily available, with a responsible adult present who knows how to administer or manage it if required.

6.2 Equipment Checks

Before each session, the responsible leader must check the equipment and materials, including:

- Tarpaulins
- Ropes
- Approved branches and logs
- Dead foliage
- First aid kit

At the end of the session:

- Tarpaulins should be dried where required
- Ropes should be left knot-free and coiled
- Damaged or missing equipment must be reported to AOEC staff
- Wet equipment needs to be reported to AOEC staff so it can be appropriately dried.
- Gear Check List must be completed

6.3 Activity Area Check

Before participants enter the activity area, the responsible leader must:

- Check the designated area for hazards
- Confirm the activity boundaries are clearly understood
- Ensure participants do not cross the boundary rope
- Confirm that only approved materials are available for use
- Ensure the area is suitable for the planned activity

The designated Shelter Building area is located in the clear area on the Burma Trail and is accessed via Team Building.

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

The activity must be modified, postponed or cancelled if environmental conditions create an unacceptable risk.

The responsible leader must consider:

- Weather conditions
- Ground conditions
- Wind conditions
- Fallen or unstable branches
- Any environmental hazards within the activity area
- The ability to safely supervise participants

The activity must not result in damage to the surrounding forest, native plants or wildlife.

8. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- Outdoor Safety Code & Environmental Care and Leave No Trace principles
- The goals and objectives of the activity
- Safe use of ropes and tarpaulins & safe handling of branches and logs
- Activity rules and boundaries & materials that may and may not be used
- Prohibition on damaging trees, seedlings and plants.
- Behaviour expectations.

Participants must understand the rules and boundaries before beginning construction.

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

9. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Participants must remain within the designated Shelter Building area.
- Participants must not cross the boundary rope.
- Only materials provided within the designated area may be used.
- Participants must not collect natural resources from outside the activity area.
- Only dead foliage and approved branches/logs may be used.
- Participants must not damage seedlings, small plants, trees or other vegetation.
- Branches and logs must be of a size and weight that participants can safely handle.
- Participants must not create structures that could collapse and injure someone.
- Ropes and tarpaulins must be used safely and appropriately.
- Participant behaviour must be continuously monitored.
- The activity must be stopped if safety or environmental protection cannot be maintained.

10. Shelter Dismantling & Site Restoration

At the end of every session:

- All shelters must be completely dismantled.
- Tarpaulins and ropes must be collected.
- Ropes must be coiled and left knot-free.
- Branches, sticks and dead foliage must be returned to a tidy designated pile.
- No materials are to be left scattered around the activity area.
- The area must be checked for rubbish or other items.
- The site must be left ready and safe for the next group.
- Gear Check List must be completed and Resources returned

Leave No Trace: The activity area must be left in a clean and environmentally respectful condition.

11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- The instructor or Group Leader takes control of the situation.
- The activity is stopped.
- Participants are moved to a safe location if required.
- First aid is administered by a trained person.
- Emergency services are contacted via 111 if required.
- AOEC Management is notified where appropriate.
- Supervising adults manage and reassure the remaining participants.
- A designated person meets or directs emergency services if required.
- All incidents must be reported and recorded in accordance with AOEC procedures.

The first aid kit must be readily accessible throughout the activity.

11. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

Environmental protection is an essential part of the Shelter Building activity.

Participants must:

- Stay within the designated activity area.
- Use only approved materials provided for the activity.
- Never damage living trees, seedlings or native plants.
- Not remove branches, foliage or other natural materials from outside the designated area.
- Not disturb wildlife or habitats.
- Respect the surrounding forest.
- Dismantle all shelters after the activity.
- Return materials to the designated collection area.
- Remove all rubbish.
- Leave the area ready for future groups.

Respect the environment — leave no trace.

Shelter Building & Environment Care

Environmental Care  Protect our Taonga - It is not just DIRT you are standing on, it is the kingdom of precious life! New Zealand is precious, and everyone who lives and travels here has a responsibility to look after it. Without Nature we are nothing!

- Be aware where you build your shelter or pitch your tent.
- Be aware not to damage or destroy seedlings, plants or trees.
- Don't break off foliage or branches to build shelters, use what is provided.
- Do not disturb wild life, insects and other creepy crawlies.
- Leave no trace

Shelter Building Discussion Points

- You want to camp for a night in the bush, what do you need to consider?
 - Camp on a durable, non-fragile surface. What does this mean
- You are with your friends in the bush and want to build a shelter, lots of plants are in you way, what should you do?
- What would happen if all students visiting AOEC would break off branches and foliage to build shelters? We have 4000+ students visiting Aongatete every year.
- You come across a large weta or spider, what would you do?
 - Respect Wildlife. Look but don't touch. This is their home.
- What does it mean to LEAVE NO TRACE?

Other Environment Care Discussion Points

- You eat an apple or a banana in the bush, what should you do with your apple core or banana skin? Dispose of waste properly - have a look a the breakdown table to see how long it takes for various items to break down.
- Accidental Rubbish - this is a problem too. Discuss how temporarily stuffing rubbish in your pocket or in the lid of your pack or other places where it is likely to fall out, can create litter. Brain storm best options
 - How best can we deal with our rubbish?
 - If we find some rubbish on the track, what should we do?
- While camping, you need to wash your camping utensils, what do you need to consider? What is the right thing to do?
 - Never wash dishes or yourself with soap/detergent in a stream, river, lake or in the sea. Even biodegradable detergent is harmful to plants and animals until it is broken down.
 - Wash away from water so detergent can be filtered by the soil.

- You are on a bush walk/camping in the bush and you need to go to the toilet (no 2's), what should you do? The 8 D's
 - ▶ Disclosure - tell someone
 - ▶ Direction Away from water, tracks, people, camp
 - ▶ Distance 10 - 50 meters away
 - ▶ Depth 10-15cm deep
 - ▶ Diameter Large amount to avoid messes
 - ▶ Drop Squat and drop
 - ▶ Disguise What to do with toilet paper? In the hole with the poo. Cover with dirt and leaf litter place a branch or stone over the top
 - ▶ Disinfect. Use hand sanitiser
- You and your friends are at a swimming hole, playing music and having heaps of fun. Other people arrive at the swimming hole, what should you do?
 - ▶ Be considerate of others
 - ▶ Where we camp
 - ▶ How we behave in huts, camp grounds or anywhere in the outdoors
 - ▶ How much noise we make (music, shouting, loud talking)
- You come to a cool spot, and you see initials and marks carved into trees and/or stone. Does this show respect for Nature? Discuss why we should never etch our initials or marks into trees or stone.

Gear list

Please ensure everything is clean and dry before storing and returning.

Shelter Building Resources		Received	Returned
Tarpaulins			
Ropes			
Container			
Discussion Cards			

Shelter Building - Risk Analysis & Management

	Reviewed: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan	Date: 03/08/2027	Next Reviewed 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 • Damage to equipment • Lost in the bush	6	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with area, Outdoor safety code, environment code, responsibility & RAMS prior to camp/activity commencement.	2
	• Poor Instructor/Group Leader knowledge	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Damage to equipment • Lost in the bush	6	• Go with group through objective of activity, instructions, environment care/safety guidelines & hazards	2
	• Lack of Support/Supervision	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Environment • Damage to equipment • Lost in the bush	4	• Supervision at prominent spots and around critical out of bounds boundaries. • Additional support may be required for younger participants.	1
	• Unsafe building/Shelter collapse	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment	4	• Brief participants on hazards, when carrying large sticks and branches, how to make a good shelter. Assist if needed.	3
	• Environment Care Code not practiced	• Damage to environment	6	• Discuss respectful and safe use of environment • Use AOEC Shelter building location only • Go through hazards and environment care when shelter building ie check surroundings to not disturb wildlife or trample on any seedlings or damage trees	3
	• Special Needs not identified	• Major injury • Minor Injury	4	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Ensure extra adult support if needed.	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. 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	• Poor Clothing & Footwear	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Ensure everyone in group is wearing covered shoes and is dressed according to the weather	3
	• Poor resources care and storage (ripped tarps, knotted, frail rope)	• Damage to equipment	4	• Store equipment dry, clean and tidy • Remove all knots from ropes • Make sure equipment is stored dry, hang to dry in boiler room/woodshed where necessary • Regular AOEC checks of resources • Report damaged equipment to AOEC Management	1
	• No first aid kit on site	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Ensure first aid is on site	3
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Physical well-being (hypothermia, hyperthermia)	6	• Check latest weather forecast - watch for unexpected changes in weather conditions Cancel or change activities if weather isn't safe • Wear weather appropriate clothing	3
	• Ground slippery, muddy and uneven	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Covered shoes must be wore	3
	• Out of Bounds not clearly marked	• Damage to environment	4	• Burma trail line to mark out of shelter building areas	2
	• Wasps	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Death	6	• Check for wasp nests regularly in the area, ensure students with allergies have their medication	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