

Walk of Courage

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)



1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Walk of Courage to ensure risks associated with height, balance, participant movement, and falling are effectively managed.

2. Scope

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Walk of Courage to ensure risks associated with height, balance, participant movement, and falling are effectively managed.

3. Description of Activity

The Walk of Courage is a cooperative team challenge where participants work together to create a raised bridge using boards.

Participants form pairs, with each pair holding a board at either end. The pairs stand alongside each other to create a continuous bridge. One participant at a time then walks across the bridge while the other participants maintain the position and stability of the boards.

The activity requires teamwork, concentration, communication, cooperation, trust, and individual focus.

The Walk of Courage must not be used unless the activity leader has completed the required AOEC induction.

4. Objectives

The activity aims to develop: Teamwork and cooperation - Communication and active listening - Focus and concentration - Trust and confidence - Responsibility for the safety of others - Reflection on team performance and behaviour.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors or Group Leaders: Lead and manage the activity safely - Complete the required AOEC Walk of Courage training before operating the activity - Conduct risk assessments and make go/no-go decisions - Inspect equipment and activity areas before use - Deliver safety briefings - Explain the objective, hazards and rules of the challenge- Monitor participant behaviour and wellbeing - Stop or modify an activity if safety is compromised - Ensure equipment is returned and any damage or loss is reported - Coordinate emergency response if required.

Supervising Adults: Retain duty of care for students at all times - Actively supervise participants - Provide the required support to the participant walking across the bridge - Assist with the first board and entry to the bridge- Assist with equipment and emergency response if required - Report any concerns or incidents to the Activity Leader.

Participants: Follow all instructions and agreed rules - Listen to the safety briefing - Work cooperatively and respectfully with others - Hold boards correctly and firmly- Maintain focus on the participant walking across the bridge - Stop immediately when instructed by the Activity Leader - Respect the activity space and equipment.

6. Group size & Ratios

- The activity is best suited to a whole class or groups of more than 20 participants.
 - Each board is held by two participants, one at each end.
 - A minimum of two adult supervisors is required to assist the participant entering the bridge and to provide appropriate support during the crossing.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs, and mobility considerations must be identified.
- A responsible adult must be assigned for participants requiring medication

7.2 Equipment Checks

Before the activity:

- Check all equipment is present and in suitable condition.
- Remove damaged or unsuitable equipment from use.
- Check that the activity area is clear of unnecessary hazards.
- Ensure there is sufficient space to safely construct and operate the bridge.
- Confirm the activity is being conducted on an appropriate surface. The activity must not be conducted over concrete, asphalt, hard-packed ground, or another unsuitable surface.

Any damaged or missing equipment must be reported to the AOEC Manager or recorded in accordance with AOEC procedures

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must wear: Closed-toe footwear - Clothing appropriate for weather conditions
- Hair should be tied back where appropriate.

Participants should use the bathroom before the activity.

ENSURE participants bring their personal medication with them, and that there is someone present (adult supervisor) who knows how to administer it

8. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- The purpose and objectives of the activity.
- The rules of the challenge.
- How the boards are to be held. The required height and spacing between boards.
- The importance of holding the boards firmly and maintaining focus.
- How the participant will enter and exit the bridge.

- The role of the adult supervisors. The requirement to move smoothly across the bridge.
- The requirement to move smoothly across the bridge.

The Activity Leader must demonstrate the correct board position and participant behaviour before the activity begins.

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

9. Activity Setup & Briefing

Participants form the bridge as follows:

- Each board is held by two participants, one at each end.
- Each pair stands alongside another pair to form a continuous bridge.
- Boards should be held firmly at approximately the same height.
- There should be approximately 20 cm between each board.
- All participants holding boards must remain focused on the walker.
- The first board must be appropriately supported by the supervising adults while the walker enters the bridge.

The Activity Leader must check the bridge before allowing a participant to begin crossing.

10. Rules

- The group must work together as a team.
 - Boards must be held firmly and at approximately the same height.
 - Everyone holding a board must remain focused on the walker.
 - Two adult supervisors must assist the walker at the first board.
 - An adult may walk alongside the participant and provide hand support where required.
 - The walker may use the heads or shoulders of the bridge holders for support where necessary and where this has been specifically demonstrated and approved by the Activity Leader.
 - The walker must move smoothly across the bridge, placing one foot in front of the other. **The walker must never place both feet on the same board.**
 - The walker should not stop while crossing unless instructed to do so for safety.
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11. Activity Management

During the activity:

- The Activity Leader continuously monitors the stability and positioning of the bridge.
- Bridge holders must maintain their position and focus on the walker.
- Participants must not deliberately move, lower, raise, or destabilise a board while someone is crossing.
- Supervising adults must remain positioned to provide immediate assistance to the walker.
- The walker must be monitored throughout the entire crossing.

- The Activity Leader may stop the activity at any time if a participant becomes unstable, loses confidence, or another safety concern develops.
 - Participants must be given sufficient time to prepare before beginning the crossing.
 - The activity must be stopped if safety is compromised.
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12. Key Risks & Controls

Fall from height

- Activity must only be conducted on playground chip or another approved impact-absorbing surface.
 - The activity leader must inspect the surface before use.
 - Adult support is required for the walker.
 - The bridge must be constructed and held correctly.
 - Participants must be monitored continuously while crossing.
 - The activity must stop immediately if the bridge becomes unstable.
 - Participant losing balance while walking
 - The walker must be appropriately assessed and briefed before participating.
 - Adult support must be available.
 - The walker must move smoothly and maintain controlled movement.
 - The walker must not be pressured to continue if they become uncomfortable or unsafe.
 - Boards being held incorrectly or becoming unstable
 - Participants must be shown the correct holding position.
 - Boards must be held firmly at approximately the same height.
 - Bridge holders must remain focused on the walker.
 - The Activity Leader must monitor the bridge throughout the crossing.
 - Distraction or communication during crossing
 - Participants must remain silent while a walker is crossing.
 - All participants must pay attention to the activity.
 - The Activity Leader may stop the activity if participants are not maintaining the required level of focus.
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13. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Activity Leader takes control of situation
- First aid is administered by trained person
- Emergency services contacted via 111 if required and a designated person meets emergency services at access point.
- AOEC Management contacted as soon as practical.
- Group managed and kept safe by supervising adults
- All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.

14. Equipment & Storage

Current equipment:

- 16 boards — stored in the Resource Room.

All boards must be checked after use and returned to their designated storage area.

Any damage or loss must be reported to AOEC Management and recorded in accordance with AOEC procedures.

15. Debrief

A short debrief should be completed after the challenge to help participants reflect on their team performance. Possible questions include:

- How did the group work together to keep the walker safe?
- How important was communication?
- What did you need to focus on while holding the boards?
- How did the group build trust?
- Did everyone understand their responsibility to the walker?
- How did you respond when the challenge became difficult?
- What could the team have done differently?
- What did you learn about trust, teamwork, and responsibility?

The debrief should focus on teamwork, communication, leadership, planning, cooperation, and positive reflection rather than simply which team completed the challenge fastest.

Walk of Courage- 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	• Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks i.e. not enforcing the safety rules	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment • Boredom/Frustration	6	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Activity Instructions, Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/activity commencement.	2
	• Not sufficient Supervision/Poor Supervision	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment	6	• Sufficient competent hands on adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities.	2
	• Failure to disclose risks	• Major injury • Minor Injury	6	• Group must be briefed on activity instructions, responsibilities, and RAMs	2
	• Improper use of equipment	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	6	• Group Leaders brief group extensively on safety & correct technique. Identify the main hazards of the activity with participants.	2
	• Lack of team work	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	6	• Good Team work • Good/Positive Communication • Good Leadership	3
	• Special Needs not identified	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Frustration • Not enough support	6	• Disabilities/behaviour issues to be discussed before or on arrival of camp. • Ensure extra adult support is met.	2
	• Distraction or participants not paying attention	• Frustration/boredom • Minor Injury • Major Injury • Damage to equipment	6	• Ensure there are enough involvement and team work for the group • Participants must be supervised • Clear communication or whistle signals	2
	• Lack of personal strength, weight deference or overall tiredness	• Frustration/boredom • Minor Injury • Major Injury • Loss of mana	6	• Pre-activity check in with teacher or group leader - discuss the energy levels, etc. is this activity the right fit for the group? • Adult support	4
	• 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	6
Equipment	• Poor clothing & footwear	• Minor Injury	6	• Before activity, check that everyone in group (students and adults) are wearing appropriate clothing and foot ware. No jandals or bare feet. Covered shoes must be worn. Dress according to the weather conditions and activity	3
	• Weight and Height of Equipment	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment	6	• Do not run or stomp on the planks • Hold the planks correctly • Be aware of fingers when walking.	4
	• Damaged, worn equipment	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment	6	• Planks and area is monthly inspected • Discontinue use of broken equipment, remove to be fixed	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	• 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 • Dress for the weather	3
	• Grounds - rabbit holes, uneven, muddy and slippery	• Minor injury	3	• Be prepared for all weather conditions, make aware of rabbits holes, uneven, slippery grounds.	2
	• Wasps	• Minor Injury • Major injury • Death	6	• Report any sightings of wasp, carry first aid kit and Wasp Spray	3

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 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	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	Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station