



VENTURE ABROAD

Safety Management System (SMS) Policy

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1. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The safety of all of our tour participants (Scouts, Guides and Leaders) are of primary concern to Venture Abroad, and it is our policy to operate tours with the highest standards of health and safety that are reasonably practicable. By any reasonable definition of the term, travel is safe but accidents can and do happen from time to time. Our commitments to our clients are as follows:

1.1 - We will promote a positive health & safety culture throughout our own and our supplier's organisations world-wide.

1.2 - We will set standards that meet the needs of our clients that are measurable, achievable and realistic.

1.3 - We will ensure the provision of adequate resources, both financial and human, to achieve a high level of safety and continuous improvement.

1.4 - We will endeavour to provide party leaders with information that will increase their ability to manage safety on their trips.

1.5 - We will measure and review our performance and compliance with our own system, and have our work audited annually by a suitably qualified external expert.

1.6 - We will ensure our staff are trained to respond quickly and efficiently in case of an emergency.

1.7 - We will review, maintain and update the SMS annually. We will review all procedures throughout the year when issues are notified to us. We will ensure that we investigate and make amendments if necessary. (See separate incident report forms) additionally we will apply any recommendations which come from our external annual audit.

The Managing Director has overall responsibility for the direction of the SMS. All senior staff are responsible for monitoring safety standards. Our policy has been devised to comply with the minimum standards for best practice in the school travel sector to ensure that reasonable precautions have been taken and due diligence exercised.

Rayburn Tours T/a Venture Abroad is a member of the School Travel Forum (STF). Membership of the STF requires us to meet and maintain specific criteria in relation to school and youth tours, it is recognised and acknowledged as a symbol of high standards by the Governments Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Signed:



John Boyden, Managing Director

22 April 2009

2. ORGANISATION OF STAFF

2.1 - Policy

The Managing Director has overall responsibility for the direction of the SMS ensuring that:

- Competent persons are appointed to implement the requirements of the SMS.
- Systems are developed for implementation of the SMS.
- Adequate human & financial resources are available to ensure policies are carried out.

2.2 - Planning

2.2.1 - The Senior Management is collectively responsible for the following:

- Ensuring participation of appropriately trained and competent personnel.
- Monitoring performance of the SMS and their departmental staff in its implementation, providing feedback to the Managing Director on success and on areas for improvement.
- Keeping up to date with safety requirements and practices applicable to the provision of tours.
- Ensuring an annual examination of trends.

2.2.2 - The Department Managers for departments operating tours are responsible for the following:

- All of 2.2.1.
- The selection, as well as the active (e.g. inspections) and reactive (e.g. accident and emergency phone procedure (as per section 11)) monitoring, of accommodation centres and concert venues, jointly with the other managers, and in line with the Accommodation policy in Section 4.

2.2.3 - The Transport Manager is responsible for the following:

- All of 2.2.1.
- The selection, as well as the active (e.g. inspections) and reactive (e.g. incident investigation) monitoring, of coach companies in line with the Transport policy in Section 5 and the emergency & incident procedures as detailed in section 11.

2.3 - Implementers

2.3.1 - The responsibilities of all management and staff are as follows:

- Be diligent in complying with the responsibilities of the SMS.
- Carry out responsibilities in accordance with training provided.
- Bring to the attention of their manager any noted weakness with the SMS or any situation that has the potential for serious and imminent danger to clients.

3. MONITORING

3.1- Monitoring by Venture Abroad

- Trained staff will audit suppliers of accommodation and coach transport.
- Senior Managers will monitor their departmental standards by spot-checking the quality of work of their staff.
- Accidents involving clients relating to coach transportation, accommodation or on activities arranged by Venture Abroad will be encouraged to be reported through the incident report forms (for use in resort) and questionnaires (for use upon return to the UK).
- Senior management will investigate incidents, accidents and 'near misses'. These will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- A formal internal review will be held at the highest level each year. This will be used to identify trends and confirm that remedial actions have been implemented. Changes in procedure will be included in our policy document.

3.2 - External Auditing

Venture Abroad have appointed a qualified independent external auditor. Their role is as follows:

- Annually to verify the content and implementation of Venture Abroad SMS to HSG65 standards.
- Assess the paperwork and processes of the SMS to verify they meet STF minimum standards (as a minimum)
- Perform spot checks in the field in order to check audits undertaken by Rayburn staff.

4. ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation used by Venture Abroad is either requested directly, or through an agent. An agent is an organisation that searches a variety of hotels (or homestay families) to find availability and suitability. Often they also organise other parts of the package, such as transport, concerts & excursions. If any component of a tour is booked through an agent, the details will be on the final itinerary.

4.1- All Accommodation

- For all accommodation, an accommodation contract is signed confirming (as a minimum) that the accommodation conforms to local & national fire, safety & hygiene standards and additionally a set of specific safety standards, aimed at further improving client safety.
- We will obtain a copy of the current fire certificate or local equivalent.
- We will obtain a copy of the supplier's current insurance policy.
- We will endeavour to obtain a copy of the hygiene certificate or local equivalent.
- Alternatively, we can ask the accommodation provider to sign a declaration confirming that they have the above documentation.

In addition please be advised that 'camping' tours involving tents and campsites will also be subject to these checks, we will carryout a campsite audit, where practicably possible. However, it is worth noting that these tours may naturally bring their own additional risks and therefore we have supplementary risk assessments in place for these specific centres.

All Accommodation (including that featured in brochures)

- All accommodation will be subject to an audit prior to using it for the first time.
- It will thereafter be inspected every three years using STF core questions as a minimum.

- A standard audit will be attained if the accommodation is used as a 'one off' or if it is used for less than 5 groups or 12 nights within any 12 months.
- If the property is used by more than 5 groups or for a total of 12 nights or more (within any 12 months) a full audit of the accommodation will be undertaken.
- Exclusions to this are hotels in New Zealand, where we will ask our agent to complete a standard audit. It will thereafter be inspected every three years using recommended core questions as a minimum.

4.2 - Accommodation supplied via Agents

- We shall ensure the agent signs an agent's contract confirming that the hotels they offer have a current fire certificate, the appropriate insurance cover, and endeavour to obtain a hygiene certificate or local equivalent. Furthermore that they conform to a set of specific safety standards, aimed at further improving client safety.
- We will annually audit sample establishments from a minimum of 10% of agents and ground handlers who provide accommodation to us. This audit will use the STF core questions as a minimum.
- A record of agent/ ground handler audits will be maintained, and accommodation audited in this manner will be treated in the same way as if the accommodation had been contracted directly. In addition the agent will be apprised of the audit standard achieved.
- If any audited establishment falls into the unacceptable category, we will advise the agent and request alternative accommodation. Agents are aware of the criteria and minimum standards we adhere to.

4.3 - Accommodation Ratings

Following the above audit procedures relevant to the particular accommodation centre, the ratings below will be applied by Venture Abroad:

4.3.1 -High Conformity Conforms

No areas of improvement can be identified. The management will be commended and encouraged to maintain their standards.

4.3.2 - Acceptable Conformity

Room for improvement has been identified, but the defects do not render the building unsafe. The defects will be brought to the immediate attention of the management at the time of auditing and be followed up in writing within 14 days. The deficiencies will be evaluated and a schedule of remedial action will be agreed and monitored.

4.3.3 - Unacceptable

We will remove this accommodation from our programme and will not consider its reinstatement until the defects have been rectified and the establishment has been re-audited to a standard that either conforms or has minor non-conformities.

5. TRANSPORT

5.1 - UK Based Coach Operators

- For all coach operators operating tours into Europe, prior to use for the first time, we will obtain a copy of:
 1. Their operating licence
 2. Motor vehicle insurance
 3. Public liability insurance
- We will endeavour to select coach operators who belong to recognised industry bodies such as the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), Guild of British Coach Operators or Coach Marque accredited operators.
- We will ensure all coach companies used sign a coach contract in which they confirm that they comply with all national, local, trade & other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice. This contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding drivers' hours, driver vetting, insurance cover & vehicle age.
- In line with UK legislation, all UK coaches will be fitted with lap-belts. In the event of a vehicle breakdown abroad, it is unlikely we will be able to find a vehicle with lap-belts as this is not a legal requirement in Europe

5.2 - Regular Use List

- We have established and will maintain a list of UK coach operators that we use regularly, or anticipate using more than 5 times in any 1 year – this will be called the regular use list. For companies on the 'regular use' list, we shall:
- Obtain on an annual basis and keep on record a copy of the operating licence, motor vehicle & liability insurance.
- Inspect the coach operator prior to using them for the first time and thereafter at least every three years. The inspection will use the STF 'core questions' as a minimum.
- Maintain a schedule of the audit status of coach operators and review it on an annual basis. This will be measured in the same way as the accommodation audits above (in terms of high conformity conforms, acceptable conformity and unacceptable).
- Ensure that the drivers have no material criminal record or detrimental employment record.

5.3 - Operators Not On The 'Regular Use List'

- In certain circumstances we may not always be able to find an operator from our regular use list. Circumstances such as :
 - High season (when all operators on the 'regular use list' are fully booked)
 - When the group is located in a remote area and we do not have an operator in that area (i.e. The Orkney Islands)
 - When a group has special coaching requirements (i.e. request a specific coach company not on the regular use list or request a trailer when we do not have trailer operators in that area) (The above are by way of examples and not by way of limitation)
- In these instances we will comply with section 5.1 of this policy.

5.4 - Non-UK Coach Operators secured by Venture Abroad

- We will ensure all coach companies used sign a coach contract for non-UK operators in which they confirm that they comply with all national, local, trade & other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice. This contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding drivers' hours, driver vetting, insurance cover & vehicle age.
- Non-UK coach companies that are contracted directly by us which will be used, or we anticipate that we will use them more than 10 times in any 1 year will:
 - Be audited every 3 years using the STF core questions as a minimum
 - Obtain on an annual basis and keep on record a copy of the operating licence, motor vehicle and liability insurance.

5.5 - Non-UK Coach Operators secured by Venture Abroad' Agents

Venture Abroad agents providing foreign coach services will sign a contract in which they agree that the companies they select will comply with the applicable national, local, trade or other laws, regulations, rules & code of practice. This contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding drivers hours, driver vetting, insurance cover and vehicle age to which the coach company must agree prior to initial use by Venture Abroad.

5.6 - Public Transport

- Appropriate means of public transport will be arranged whenever this is the best means of getting the group to its destination.
- Public Transport regulations are determined by the appropriate authorities in each country. As it is outside our control, it is not felt that any additional measures can be taken by Venture Abroad and care must be taken by clients to ensure that it is appropriate.

5.7 - Air

- All transport by air from the UK is regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and adheres to strict safety measures. The CAA has granted Venture Abroad an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL No 3475). No additional measures need be undertaken by Rayburn.
- All transport by air outside the UK is governed by foreign national regulating bodies. Again, no additional measures need be undertaken by Rayburn.

5.8 Ferries / Eurotunnel

All ferries and Eurotunnel are regulated nationally. For major British ferry companies used, we will check on an annual basis that levels of on board safety are being maintained, and a record of such discussions is kept.

5.9 - Rail Transport & Eurostar

All rail transport is regulated by the countries through which trains travel. No additional measures need be undertaken by Rayburn.

6. CONCERT VENUES

We will use reasonable endeavours to obtain from the providers of concert venues evidence that health and safety has been evaluated.

7. EXCURSIONS

7.1 Excursions booked through Venture Abroad

- We will use reasonable endeavours to obtain from the providers of visits and excursions evidence that health and safety has been evaluated.
- An outline of any potential remaining risks which the provider wishes to bring to the attention of school and youth groups.
- Venture Abroad will also provide a risk assessment handbook for all tour types, and a specialised risk assessment handbook for Geography tours, where it is considered that the outdoor activities undertaken need to be specifically addressed.

7.2 Excursions booked through agents

We will endeavour to obtain from agents' evidence that health & safety has been evaluated by venue operators or by a local enforcing authority.

8. INSPECTION VISITS

Venture Abroad will provide means for clients to inspect a destination in advance of travelling with their group.

9. SAFETY INFORMATION BEFORE TRAVEL

Venture Abroad shall provide written practical safety information to their clients prior to their tour.

10. TOUR COURIERS

10.1 UK Citizens

Tour couriers who are Venture Abroad members of staff who are UK citizens, are police checked for suitability for working with children (CRB Checks).

10.2 Couriers appointed through Foreign Agencies

For tours that are accompanied by foreign tour couriers provided by agents, Venture Abroad will seek confirmation from agents that tour couriers are suitable for working with children. CRB checks at present do not extend to foreign countries.

11. EMERGENCY & INCIDENT PROCEDURES

Emergency Phones

- On a weekly rota basis, two trained senior members of Rayburn staff are appointed as 24 hour emergency contacts for group leaders to contact when on tour. All group leaders, British coach drivers and agents on tour will be given these contact details and given guidelines on the circumstances under which the emergency phone should be used.
- We have produced and will maintain a fully documented emergency procedure that is available to all clients and is operational when any clients are abroad or in transit.
- A file outlining details of current groups on tour and emergency contact numbers for suppliers will be passed to the 24 hour emergency contacts.

12 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Crisis Management Plan is a document defining procedures and the roles that all staff would carry out in case of a serious incident involving Rayburn clients on tour.

13. TRAINING

13.1 General Training

- There will be a formal training session given to all appropriate staff on an annual basis. Employees will be trained in those areas of the SMS for which they may be required to exercise responsibility.
- All staff will undergo SMS awareness training and kept aware of the latest developments with the SMS.

13.2 Audit Training

- Annual in-house training will be provided to staffs who undertake accommodation audits.
- In addition external bodies training is also available to all staff who undertake accommodation audits

14. CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please contact:

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