



EXPEDITION SAFETY CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Introduction

This Code of Practice applies also to Training Courses and is relevant to all outdoor activities provided by the Brathay Exploration Group Trust Ltd.

Members of expedition leader teams assume a position of trust, and in doing so accept a duty of care for those in their charge. The Code of Practice is mainly concerned to minimise the risk of untoward or dangerous situations when they arise on expeditions. Each expedition is unique and requires its own safety framework. Hence this document only attempts to establish the principles of good practice which the Group expects to characterise its expeditions and courses.

2. Associated Documentation

Implicit in the Code of practice are those aspects of the safety procedures embodied in the following documents:

Statement of Policy on Safety
Safety Policy for Expeditions
Accident and major incident Procedure
CRB and Child Protection Procedures
Notes for Leaders
Leaders' Briefing Pack
Expeditioner's Guide

3. Leadership and Leadership Training

Appropriate and informed leadership is the most fundamental element of a safe expedition/course. It is the responsibility of the Expedition sub-committee to ensure that suitable experienced and competent leaders are selected for the Group's expeditions and courses, and to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for final approval. Appropriate training, relevant and recent experience, and, where possible, qualifications obtained through National Governing Bodies, are appropriate requirements for all leaders taking parties of young people into potentially hazardous environments, in addition to an enthusiasm for the task. Leaders must, at all times, be aware of their own personal limitations and ensure that they operate well within those limitations, physical, mental and emotional.

3.1 Action Required:

- a) Under most circumstances members of the leader team must possess a current adult First Aid Certificate (St. John's, Red Cross or approved equivalent), and also the Brathay Exploration Group Expedition Medicine Course certificate or equivalent (as designated by the Group's Honorary Medical Adviser). Only in exceptional circumstances will these rules be waived, and only then when suitable and sufficient provision has been made.
- b) The Group's Expedition sub-committee reserves the right to:
 - (i) Increase the number of qualified leaders;
 - (ii) Insist that the leader team include a qualified doctor;



- (iii) Cancel, any expedition/course which fails to meet the above leader requirements.
- c) The main leader must ensure that members of the leader team have levels of competence appropriate to the tasks which they will be required to undertake, and to the potential hazards which they are likely to encounter. Where assistant leaders are inexperienced, they may still be appointed to the team, if it can be shown that appropriate support, supervision and monitoring can be provided.
- d) All active leaders will be encouraged to acquire appropriate qualifications and the Group will provide support to individual where possible, and at its own discretion.

4. Planning

Meticulous planning and organisation are important elements of any expedition, and are essential to safety. As a means of establishing a culture of safety, all members of the expedition should be encouraged to participate in the process of preparation.

4.1 Action Required:

- a) Planning should be carried out in accordance with the current edition of the 'Notes for Leaders of Brathay Expeditions'. The relevant sections of the 'Leader Briefing Pack' will be completed and returned in accordance with the published timetable. Of particular relevance in this context are the 'Risk Assessment' and 'Safety Equipment Request' forms.
- b) The aims of the expedition will be clearly and unambiguously stated to all those involved with the expedition whether as assistant leaders, members, parents, sponsors or members of the Expedition Committee. It must be made clear to all that it may not always be possible to continue with a planned or advertised activity owing to the complex and dynamic situations frequently encountered on expeditions.
- c) Consequent to the stated aims, suitable criteria and mechanisms will be established for the selection of members, and these will be made clear to applicants. Referees will normally be contacted by the main leader to confirm the credentials of all applicants.
- d) Where significant foreseeable levels of risk may occur, there should be a clear understanding with participants and (where appropriate) parents, as to the nature and degree of risk which is acceptable.
- e) At least one month before departure the main leader must brief the leader team about potential hazards and the medical condition of participants. At departure all members of the leader team should be provided with a full list of emergency contact numbers, written details of medical conditions of all members and leaders and an emergency evacuation form.
- f) At the earliest opportunity in the expedition all leaders and members must be fully briefed on the expedition's specific emergency procedures, including the name of the leader who will deputise for the main leader in the event of an emergency. They should be provided with all relevant emergency telephone numbers including that of the BEG Office. The briefing should also clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of all members and leaders.



- g) Although safety is a shared responsibility, it may be appropriate for a particular expedition to appoint its own safety officer.
- h) The main leader together with all other members of the leader team must read and understand the 'Major Incident Procedure', (see Leaders' briefing Pack) and be prepared to implement the procedure in a given situation.

5. Knowledge and Group Training

Ideally one (preferably the main leader) or more of the leader team should be familiar with the expedition area, if not its specific location. In certain circumstances the aim may be to explore a little known area. In such a case only a well qualified or experienced leader, able to assess and plan accordingly will be appointed. Where an expedition follows a well documented route (e.g. European Treks) approval may be given for expeditions under the direction of leaders with substantial experience in comparable terrain.

A group should be well prepared for an expedition. Training, either prior to departure or during the initial phase in the field, should include appropriate instruction in the techniques and skills required for safe movement, and in the management and use of equipment. This will contribute to individual confidence and encourage co-operation.

5.1 Action Required:

- a) When composing an expedition proposal, leaders must decide whether a reconnaissance is needed. If so, the cost must be included in the proposal. In some circumstances a detailed reconnaissance will be possible during the initial phase of a longer expedition. In others, provided leaders are familiar with comparable areas, planning may be based on guide books if they are sufficiently detailed and reliable. Ultimately it is the shared responsibility of the Expedition Committee to sanction the planning arrangements for any expedition.
- b) Main leaders must provide for the adequate training of members during the initial phase of the expedition. The leader team must satisfy themselves that any member can safely undertake an expedition activity before sanctioning their involvement; lack of fitness is a common cause of accidents and members who are not sufficiently fit should not be allowed to participate in an activity. It is the responsibility of the main leader to ensure that all members are aware of the physical demands anticipated for any expedition or course, and to prescribe appropriate training where fitness is declared to be lacking.
- c) It is the member's responsibility to respond truthfully as to their level of fitness, and then ensure that they reach the required level of fitness for the expedition or course. Briefings and training must also cover environmental and health hazards, paying particular attention to arrangements for hygiene and cleanliness.
- d) All members of the expedition must be made aware of the levels of medical expertise and responsibility of the individual leaders.
- e) Leaders should familiarise themselves with the levels of first aid expertise of the members, and consider the need for some briefing or basic training. (This section should be read in conjunction with Section 6.1.1b).



6. Equipment

Clear identification of the expedition aims is essential, as it is these, in conjunction with the conditions in the expedition area, which will determine the choice of equipment. The combination of group equipment (medical, safety and camping) and personal equipment will reflect the physical and climatic conditions, the activities to be undertaken, the degree of mobility demanded, and the availability of transport. Financial considerations may also be important if recommending the purchase of equipment by members or BEG.

Where technical equipment (e.g. crampons, ropes etc.) are issued, the leader responsible for their use must personally draw from the stores and check that they are suitable. All equipment used on an expedition must be returned to the store, by the agreed date, and not later than the annual October Reunion, and all usage logs (e.g. ropes) must be completed. Equipment which has been damaged **must** be clearly identified and positioned separately within the store for the examination by the competent officer.

6.1 Action Required:

6.1.1 Medical Requirements

- a) The Honorary Medical Officer will advise the Expedition Committee on the composition of the medical kits, and on the use of any drugs contained in them.
- b) The Director will be responsible for equipping the expedition with appropriate medical kits, (ratio: Maximum 10 members per Kit taken.). All of the leader team (and where appropriate, members) must have knowledge of the contents of the kits and applications.
- c) An individual Expedition Medical Record must be maintained throughout the period of the expedition, detailing **all treatment** provided to a person. This information is to include self-prescribed treatment. (See further details in the *Leaders Briefing Pack*).
- d) Expedition members must be advised to bring a basic personal first aid kit, as well as any personal prescribed medicines. If failure to take prescription drugs may have serious consequences for any member or leader of an expedition, a nominated leader should carry a back-up supply, and always operate in the same area as that person.
- e) The Honorary Medical Officer's advice will be sought when a member or leader declares on their medical form any condition that may indicate a concern and an increased level of risk.
- f) All expeditions travelling outside the United Kingdom will be provided with an appropriate 'letter', confirming the prescribed use of the prescription drugs carried within the expedition medical kits.
- g) As the medical kits contain sharp objects (scalpel, scissors, needles etc.), the kits must always, if air travel is involved, be checked in with hold baggage.

6.1.2 Technical Requirements

- a) Ropes:
 - (i) These will be assessed annually, and downgraded as appropriate.



- (ii) The rope ends will be labelled with description and marked with rings in indelible pen according to the following scheme:
 - 1 Rings - Top-rope climbing, glacier travel, short abseil.
 - 2 Rings - Low load use: river crossing, walking safety/confidence.
 - (iii) At the end of an expedition, the rope log (contained in the rope bag) must be completed.
 - (iv) If a rope suffers its maximum number of permitted falls, or other damage which compromises its safety, it must be taken out of use, cut in half and disposed of.
 - (v) Where a single rope is used, except as a confidence rope or during river crossings, a designated UIAA Single Rope, of not less than 10mm must be used. Ropes with diameter of 9mm or less must be used as double or twin ropes (as indicated by UIAA markings), that is two lengths of rope must connect any two people.
- b) All expedition technical safety equipment will be checked annually by the Technical Equipment Officer, and replaced as necessary.
- c) If an expedition is going to need equipment which is not included in the standard equipment lists (see 'Notes for Leaders'), it must be budgeted for in the Expedition Proposal as no separate funds exist for its purchase.

6.1.3 Member Requirements

- a) Leaders must inform members of specific requirements in terms of clothing and equipment, emphasising any items which are essential to safety. Members will be issued with a copy of the 'Expeditioner's Guide', which includes general kit lists, but this should be supplemented by any necessary information specific to the expedition. In addition, leaders must satisfy themselves that members have actually equipped themselves adequately before going into the field.
- b) Each expedition participant should carry some form of personal identification which includes any essential medical information. (E.g. Passport and if appropriate a medical bracelet). The leader team will also have this information in the form of individual 'Medical Questionnaire' and an individual 'Medical Record' form.

7. Procedures

Procedures must be adopted which generate a culture of safety on the expedition.

7.1 Action Required:

- a) Prior to the expedition, all participants will be provided with the name and telephone number of an emergency contact in this country, as well as any relevant emergency information relating to the area of operation (telephone numbers for mountain rescue, British Consulate etc.). Although it is impossible to plan detailed responses to all possible emergencies, leaders and members should be briefed on general emergency procedures before, or during the initial stages of an expedition.
- b) During the expedition, all leaders must have immediate access to emergency contact numbers and medical details of their members and peers, as well as any other relevant information.
- c) Leaders of overseas expeditions must familiarise themselves with the emergency arrangements and procedures detailed in the schedules for personal insurance cover, and must carry the insurance



schedule documents together with a copy of the 'Insurance Medical Questionnaire', at all times. (See 'Leaders Briefing Pack - Insurance Cover').

- d) All participants should be encouraged to identify and report any hazards, and to seek to maintain the safety of others as well as their own.
- e) All leaders and members on an expedition must be kept well-informed about the situation and any decisions taken, by whatever means are appropriate.
- f) Exhaustion and poor morale can quickly undermine safety. Leaders must remain alert to the condition of members, and must be prepared to offer encouragement. Activities must be paced accordingly and time set aside for recuperation, relaxation and reflection. After a long journey into the expedition's operating area, it is desirable to spend the first 24 hours in a safe, non-stressful environment.
- g) Leaders should be alert to the possibility of adverse physical conditions resulting from activities or environmental factors, and should carry out appropriate physical checks. (e.g. blisters)
- h) Accidents must be reported according to the 'Accident Procedure' in the Leaders Briefing Pack.
- i) Prior to the departure of the expedition and as often as may be necessary during an expedition, members must be made aware of the Groups fundamental rule concerning the use of 'controlled substances'. The Group bans the use of all illegal substances such as drugs, throughout the period of the expedition or course. (See 'Notes for Leaders')

8. Awareness of Danger

In order to minimise dangers on an expedition, hazards have to be anticipated and risks assessed. A hazard is a situation or set of circumstances which can cause harm to people. A risk is a chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard. Risk assessment is the systematic process of identifying hazards and evaluating risks; through this process, strategies may be developed to safeguard expedition participants.

8.1 Action Required:

- a) The main leader will be responsible for the completion and submission of a Risk Assessment Form as part of the initial Expedition Proposal process. The Risk Assessment form should be re-submitted, with appropriate revisions not later than 10 weeks prior to the departure of the expedition. This will be made available to all members of the leader team, and to members (or parents/guardians if under 18 years of age) on request.
- b) Leaders must familiarise themselves with the patterns of weather in the operating area, paying particular attention to any precursors of adverse conditions. Members must be briefed accordingly.
- c) The main leader will be provided with copies of the application forms of expedition members. All leaders must be apprised of the previous experience and relevant medical conditions of members and each other. They must keep each other informed of the strengths and weaknesses and progress of individual members. If problems arise with members who may affect safety, all leaders must be informed at the earliest opportunity. If, for any reason, a member's action or behaviour seems likely



to compromise safety, whether their own or that of others, a leader must not hesitate to suspend that person from all but essential activities.

- d) Irrespective of the cost of an expedition, all involved must be made aware that the constantly changing conditions (both human and physical) encountered on expeditions may compromise the safe continuation of some activities. In such a situation leaders will suspend or cancel any activity so affected, whether previously planned and publicised or not.

9. Supervision

The appropriate size for any operational group on an expedition is determined by a number of factors which include; the expertise of the leaders; the experience, maturity and capability of the participants, and the remoteness of the area.

9.1 Action Required:

- a) The minimum number of leaders on an expedition will be two. A leader team will preferably include members of both sexes.
- b) The Expedition Committee, in consultation with main leaders, will determine supervision levels on an individual expedition basis. In determining levels of supervision, consideration will be given to: the length of the expedition, the remoteness, potential conditions, availability of emergency services, planned activities, the target client group, and the range of skills required and possessed by the leader team.
- c) The main leader may deem it appropriate for a group to work or travel unaccompanied by leaders at some stage in the expedition. In such circumstances the main leader must be satisfied that the group is adequately equipped, that all involved know who is in charge, and that they are all given a comprehensive briefing which includes clear objectives, explicit deadlines and boundaries of activity, hazards, emergency procedures and the plans and rendezvous schedule of the rest of the expedition.
- d) No member or leader at any time during the expedition may travel alone. Leaders must monitor members to ensure this rule is observed especially in overseas situations. Care must also be taken that persons do not depart camp without the prior approval of a leader.
- e) Particular care must be exercised when members are 'free' in rest and recreation time. There is a danger that they will take part in activities not covered by the expedition insurance policy or risk assessment and /or ones that are inappropriate or dangerous. This is especially true at the end of the expedition.
- f) Where a member or leader wishes to join or leave the expedition at other than the stated meeting and departure point/location of the expedition, then a clear start/end location and time must be confirmed before the expedition starts. For those under the age of 18 years, parental/guardian consent must be obtained in writing.