



# SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SMS) POLICY

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# 1. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The safety of all our tour participants (Scouts, Guides and Leaders) is 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, group 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. 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 and youth travel sector to ensure that reasonable precautions have been taken and due diligence exercised.

Signed:



John Boyden, Managing Director

## 2. ORGANISATION OF STAFF

### 2.1 Policy

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

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

### 2.2 Planning

2.2.1 The Operations and Customer Relations Manager is 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 Board of Directors on success and on areas for improvement.
- Ensuring an annual examination to identify trends.
- 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 6](#) and the emergency & incident procedures as detailed in [section 14](#).

2.2.2 The Managers of our operational departments are responsible for the following:

- Keeping up to date with safety requirements and practices applicable to the provision of tours and the SMS.
- The selection, as well as the active (e.g. inspections) and reactive (e.g. accident and emergency phone procedure, as per [section 14](#)) monitoring of accommodation centres, excursions and concert venues, jointly with the other managers, and in line with the relevant policies in [sections 4-10](#).

### 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, the Operations and Customer Relations Manager or the Board of Directors 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.
- The Operations and Customer Relations Manager and Administration Manager will monitor departmental standards by spot-checking the quality of audits and centrally assessing and grading them.
- Accidents involving clients relating to coach transportation, accommodation or 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).
- The Operations and Customer Relations Manager will investigate incidents, accidents and 'near misses'. These will be reviewed as they arise as well as 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 has appointed a qualified independent external auditor. Their role is as follows:

- To verify the content and implementation of Rayburn Tours/Venture Abroad SMS to HSG65 standards on an annual basis.
- 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 Tours/Venture Abroad staff.

## 4. ACCOMMODATION

All accommodation used by Venture Abroad is either requested directly, or through an agent. An agent is an organisation that has access to a variety of accommodation types to find suitable and available options. Often they also organise other parts of a package, such as transport, concerts, fixtures and excursions. If any component of a tour is booked through an agent, their details will be included on the final itinerary.

### 4.1 All Accommodation (including that featured in brochures)

- A 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 ensure that children and adults are accommodated separately and according to gender breakdowns.
- Each accommodation centre will be subject to an audit prior to using it for the first time, which covers fire safety, security, insurance and hygiene.
- It will thereafter be inspected every three years using STF core questions as a minimum.

- 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 within a calendar year. A standard audit is completed by the hotelier or agent on our behalf.
- If the property is used by more than 5 groups within a calendar year, a supplementary audit of the accommodation will be undertaken. A supplementary audit is completed by a member of Venture Abroad staff who has undergone appropriate training and competency assessment.

## **4.2 Accommodation supplied via Agents**

- All of 4.1.
- We shall ensure the agent signs an agent contract confirming that each accommodation they offer has 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.
- 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 informed 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. The deficiencies will be risk assessed by a Senior Manager and a schedule of recommendations will be issued to the accommodation in writing.
- 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 of either High Conformity Conforms or Acceptable Conformity.

## 5. TRANSPORT

All Coach Operators used by Venture Abroad are either requested directly, or through an agent. An agent is an organisation that has access to a variety of coach operators to find suitable and available options. Often they also organise other parts of a package, such as accommodation, concerts, fixtures and excursions. If any component of a tour is booked through an agent, their details will be included on the final itinerary.

### 5.1 All Coach Operators

- We will endeavour to select coach operators who belong to recognised industry bodies such as, in the UK, 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 and vehicle age.
- Each coach operator will be subject to an audit prior to using it for the first time, which covers insurance, breakdown and emergency procedures, staff selection and maintenance.
- It will thereafter be inspected every three years using STF core questions as a minimum.
- As a minimum, a standard audit will be attained if the coach operator is used as a 'one off' or if it is used for less than 5 groups within a calendar year or if it is booked via an agent. A standard audit is completed by the coach operator or agent on our behalf.
- If the operator is used by more than 5 groups within a calendar year, and is booked directly by Venture Abroad, a supplementary audit of the coach operator will be undertaken. A supplementary audit is completed by a member of Venture Abroad staff who has undergone appropriate training and competency assessment.
- Non-UK coach operators

### 5.2 Coach Operator Ratings

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

- 5.2.1 High Conformity Conforms  
No areas of improvement can be identified. The management will be commended and encouraged to maintain their standards.
- 5.2.2 Acceptable Conformity  
Room for improvement has been identified, but the defects do not render the operator unsafe. The defects will be brought to the immediate attention of the management at the time of auditing. The deficiencies will be risk assessed by a Senior Manager and a schedule of recommendations will be issued to the operator in writing.

### 5.2.3 Unacceptable

We will remove this operator 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 of either High Conformity Conforms or Acceptable Conformity.

## 5.3 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 this 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.

## 5.4 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 Rayburn Tours/Venture Abroad an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL No 3475). No additional measures need be undertaken by Venture Abroad.
- All transport by air outside the UK is governed by foreign national regulating bodies. Again, no additional measures need be undertaken by Venture Abroad.

## 5.5 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 pass on any safety information provided to our groups in final documents packs.

## 5.6 Rail Transport and Eurostar

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

## 6. EXCURSIONS

### 9.1 Excursions

We will internally assess excursions and categorise them by risk as follows:

#### 9.1.1 Risk Category 1

- Low risk excursions such as museum visits. 'Look and See'.
- These excursions will be assessed by the Operations and Customer Relations Manager prior to being used for the first time and thereafter every five years, or in line with any major changes.
- Group feedback and accidents, incidents and near misses will be monitored.

#### 9.1.2 Risk Category 2

- Excursions which have a 'doing' element to them, and/or which have potential risks inherent in the environment, process or activity, and/or which may be unfamiliar to participating groups.
- These excursions will be asked to complete an excursion questionnaire covering licencing, insurance and safety.
- The excursion questionnaire will be assessed by the Customer Relations Manager prior to being used for the first time and thereafter every three years, or in line with any major changes. A supplier assessment form will be completed internally and any safety information that needs to be brought to participating groups' attention will be included in our Tour Management Handbook (Activities).
- Group feedback and accidents, incidents and near misses will be monitored.

#### 9.1.3 Risk Category 3

- Water Immersion based excursions such as swimming.
- These excursions will be asked to complete pool safety questionnaire covering licencing, insurance and safety.
- The pool safety questionnaire will be assessed by the Customer Relations Manager prior to being used for the first time and thereafter every three years, or in line with any major changes.
- Group feedback and accidents, incidents and near misses will be monitored.

#### 9.1.4 Risk Category 4

- Adventurous Activities as defined by the Adventure Activities Licencing Authority (AALA) or which have a considerable risk to participating groups.
- Activity providers will be asked to complete a detailed adventurous activity audit covering licencing, insurance and safety.
- The adventurous activity audit will be assessed by an expert Technical Advisor prior to being used for the first time, which will be reviewed annually and fully audited again every three years, or in line with any major changes.
- Group feedback and accidents, incidents and near misses will be monitored.

(Our risk assessments should be used as a guide and are not replacements for undertaking your own specific risk assessments on the spot. Any changes to the identified risks on the day of the activity should be assessed and if deemed appropriate, the activity should be halted until the risk has been managed.)

## 7. INSPECTION VISITS

Venture Abroad will provide means for clients to inspect a destination in advance of travelling with their group. This may be at an additional cost.

## 8. SAFETY INFORMATION BEFORE TRAVEL

Venture Abroad shall provide written practical safety information to their clients prior to their tour to include local area information and fire safety precautions.

## 9. TOUR COURIERS

### 9.1 UK Citizens

Any tour couriers with UK citizenship are police checked for suitability for working with children (DBS checks, previously known as CRB checks); this could be a member of the Venture Abroad staff or an externally contracted courier.

### 9.2 Non-UK based couriers

Any tour couriers who do not have UK citizenship cannot be police checked under the DBS scheme, however Venture Abroad will seek confirmation that tour couriers are suitable for working with children by liaising with relevant foreign agents and monitoring feedback.

## 10. EMERGENCY & INCIDENT PROCEDURES

### Emergency Phones

- On a rota basis, one fully-trained senior member of Venture Abroad staff per operational department are appointed as 24 hour emergency contacts for group leaders to contact when on tour. All group leaders, coach operators, accommodation centres and agents will be given these contact details and guidelines on the circumstances under which the emergency phone should be used.
- We have produced and 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 distributed to the 24 hour emergency contacts.
- A back-up emergency phone is contactable in the unlikely event that the departmental emergency phone is unreachable.

## 11. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Crisis Management Plan is a document defining procedures and the roles that staff would assume in case of a serious incident involving Venture Abroad groups on tour.

## 12. TRAINING

### 12.1 General Training

- There will be formal training given to all appropriate staff during their induction, following which this will be renewed as requested. 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.

### 12.2 Audit Training

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

## 13. CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please contact:

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