

# Participants

## Safety information

Your SMS must outline what safety information you'll gather from staff and participants, and what information you'll provide.

### Information from staff

As well as staff qualifications (including driving and first aid), you need to record medical information such as anything they need to carry at all times. Swimming ability may also be important.

### Information from participants

Providers must have the right information to:

- Determine whether someone should participate in an activity.
- Determine participants' expectations and needs, including why they're doing the activity, eg for education or an experience.
- Determine staffing, supervision, equipment, and activity choice.
- Manage a participant's existing medical needs or injuries.
- Look after participants during an emergency.

Information that must be gathered includes:

- Technical skill requirements, eg swimming ability.
- Physical aspects, eg fitness, height, weight, age, disabilities, existing medical conditions or injuries.
- Psychological factors such as fears or phobias and the ability and likelihood to follow instructions.
- Language and cultural factors.

### Information to participants

Participants must have the right information to:

- Understand the risk of the activity and make an informed choice whether or not they want to participate.
- Follow the provider's safety and operational procedures.

## Pre-booking



You must provide potential participants information on the activity risks while there is still an opportunity for them to change their mind.

For activities involving children, ensure risk disclosure information is given to parents and teachers. This may mean the information needs to be delivered twice.

Information that must be provided includes:

- What the activity actually involves to enable people decide if the activity is suitable for them.
- The activity's hazards and risks.
- The physical demands of the activity, eg a difficult multi-day hike or a half day walk.
- The technical skills required, eg ability to belay, roll a kayak, or use crampons.

Information may be provided through:

- A website.
- Videos, particularly for activities in hidden environments, eg canyoning and caving.
- Printed material, eg risk disclosure, medical.
- Social media.

## Pre-activity

For adventure activities, inform participants that:

- This is an adventure activity involving risk of serious injury or death and you can't totally guarantee their safety.
- The activity may be mentally and physically demanding.
- They must follow staff instructions at all times and understand that this is critical to their safety and that of others.
- Some hazards can't be avoided, eg challenging rapids that can't be portaged.
- There may be extra responsibility expected of them, eg indirectly supervised activities and activities where participants perform safety critical tasks for each other.

This could be done through:


- Verbal briefings, using a checklist.
- Picture boards and cue cards in conjunction with verbal briefings.
- Demonstrations, eg how to hold a river board or belay a climber.

Ensure you have procedures for what to do if a participant chooses not to take part in the activity.

## ***Providing safety information***

It's important to provide information at the right time and in a way participants will understand. Ensure it's simple to understand, brief and to the point, and available in the relevant languages.

The information should be consistent and often forms part of your safe operating procedures (SOPs).

 **Note!** Briefings are often too long – provide information only when and where it's required.

### ***Checking understanding***

Check that participants understand safety information. This can be done by:

- Asking questions.
- Asking people to demonstrate key actions, eg drive a quad bike or complete a ferry glide.
- Giving them time to read the form – a quick sign-off doesn't check for understanding.
- Observing their mood, eg are they overly confident or nervous?

### **Record keeping**

You should keep completed risk disclosure forms, and consider keeping records of:

- Participant names, ages and medical information.
- Any unusual situations with participants and how you managed them, eg extra measures you took to manage a client with special needs.

## **Screening**

Your SOP should state who your activity is targeted at and how you'll ensure that the right people are on the right activity.

Consider:

- Participants' expectations and needs, including why they're doing the activity, eg for education or an experience.
- Technical skill requirements, eg climbing, swimming ability.
- Physical aspects, eg fitness, height, weight, age, disabilities, medical conditions or injuries.
- Psychological factors such as fears or phobias and the ability and likelihood to follow instructions.
- Language and cultural factors.

Check that your criteria meet sector good practice for who should participate in the activity and are within the limitations of any safety equipment, eg size and weight limits.

### **How and when to screen**

Screening should happen before people sign-up for the activity, and be ongoing during the activity.

- Clearly state participant requirements in marketing and booking processes.
- Include participant screening checks at relevant stages during the activity itself, eg swim tests, belay checks

Office and field staff all have roles to play in screening participants. Ensure your requirements are clear and being used consistently.

Ensure you have procedures for what to do if a participant should no longer take part in the activity.

## Supervision

Supervision systems are a vital tool for managing risks. They're usually documented in SOPs and involve more than just ratios of staff to participants.

There must be a staff member responsible for managing the supervision system. This person should be experienced and able to exercise good judgement.

### Establishing a supervision system

Supervision levels are an important part of your supervision system. They describe how closely participants will be supervised (directly or indirectly) and the staff-to-participants ratios.

State supervision levels for each activity and site.

Pay particular attention to the complexity and margin for error of the safety critical tasks. Ensure there are triggers for increasing supervision levels when situations are less than optimal. These should include:

- Staff who lack confidence or are less experienced.
- Participants who are less physically able, younger, less confident, or less likely to follow instructions.
- Activities that involve long wait times where those waiting are exposed to serious risks.

### Direct supervision

Direct supervision is when staff are able to physically intervene and manage risks.

This could be by supervising a participant if staff feel they are unlikely to perform the activity safely or who has yet to be approved for indirect supervision.



When supervising belayers, don't assume that you can physically intervene before a braking failure – it can happen too quickly.

### Indirect supervision

Indirect supervision is when staff aren't close enough to physically intervene and manage risks.

Participants must be approved as suitable for indirect supervision. Clearly identify what they must be able to do and pay particular attention to safety-critical tasks.

Approval could be by:

- Assessments under direct supervision in a low-consequence environment.
- A staff member can verify that they've previously observed them perform the skills competently.
- The provider has a record that they've already been approved for indirect supervision and are still current.

- The participant has a recognised national qualification relevant to the skills to be checked.

### ***Different levels of indirect supervision***

Indirect supervision can be:

- Proactive by actively monitoring a participant and being close enough to intervene verbally, or
- Reactive where the staff member isn't monitoring the participant and will only provide assistance if it's sought.

A participant under proactive indirect supervision, must be one who staff are confident will act safely.

A participant under reactive indirect supervision, must be one who staff are confident will act safely in both normal and adverse conditions, eg in a distracting atmosphere or while becoming familiar with the activity.

### **What to take into account**

Factors to consider when developing a supervision system include:

#### ***Environmental***

- The hazards and risks of the activity and its environment, including the degree of risk inherent in the activity and the frequency of exposure to risk.
- Environmental factors on the day, eg weather, avalanche hazards, river level, and wave height and the available clothing and equipment to manage these hazards.
- Contingency plans, eg for when a number of participants are out of their boats, and remote settings where there is limited access to emergency services.

#### ***Staff***

- Good-practice standards for maximum participant numbers and staff-to-participant ratios for each site and its activities in ideal conditions – less than ideal conditions must trigger higher levels of supervision.
- The number and competence of staff.
- The nature of safety tasks being performed by staff, including the number of participants they're managing and for how long, eg task repetition and fatigue.
- Ways for staff to maintain the level of focus required to supervise effectively, eg timely breaks, changing from one area of responsibility to another, buddy systems, and minimising distractions.
- Procedures for ensuring supervision levels are maintained when there is an overnight and during unplanned staff breaks such as toilet stops.

#### ***Participants***

- Whether participants perform safety-critical task – where a mistake could result in serious injury, eg belaying or driving a quad bike. These tasks require more detailed supervision systems.

- Participants' competence at safety-critical tasks, the likelihood they'll follow instructions, and their acceptance of responsibility for managing risk.
- The number of people exposed to risk at any one time, including those who are waiting their turn or have finished an activity.
- Participant age and maturity, ability, and experience.



Note!

You should identify triggers for when the supervision system needs adjusting, eg less experienced staff, change in participant competence, young children, high-distraction level, or changing environmental conditions.

### **Varying levels of supervision**

For activities requiring varying levels of supervision, ensure that:

- The requirements for each area or activity are clearly understood, eg safety briefings, safety zones, or barriers.
- Where participants require a different level of supervision, ensure they're clearly identifiable, eg different groups stay in different areas or use of marked safety equipment.
- Participants are clear on what they're approved to do, and on what to do if they change to an activity requiring a different level of supervision.

### **Supervising qualified participants**

If a participant holds a national qualification that is current and covers the required skills for a task, they may not need to be supervised.

If allowing someone to participate unsupervised, ensure they understand that they won't be supervised and have agreed to operate independently.



Note!

A participant having a qualification doesn't absolve the provider of responsibility to share specific safety information.