

Outdoor Team Building Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)

1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of Outdoor Team Building Challenges to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are supported.

2. Scope

Applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, Group Leaders, supervising adults, and participants involved in Outdoor Team Building Challenges.

3. Description of Activity

Outdoor Team Building Challenges are a series of structured activities designed to develop teamwork, communication, leadership, planning, problem-solving, cooperation, and objective-focused thinking.

Challenges require participants to listen, communicate effectively, contribute to the team, and work together to achieve a defined objective.

The current Team Challenge Arena may include:

- Tyre Shift
- Tram Tracks
- Lava Flow
- Spot Maze
- Stacker
- Balancing Pole
- Challenge Wall — cannot be used without prior AOEC training
- Pipeline
- Tarp Flip

The Group Leader may select, modify, or combine challenges according to the age, ability, confidence, objectives, and needs of the group.

Challenges may be timed or completed against a defined objective. Competitive elements or scoring systems may be used where appropriate, provided they support the learning objectives and do not encourage unsafe behaviour.

4. Objectives

The activity aims to develop: Teamwork and cooperation - Communication and active listening - Leadership and shared decision-making - Planning and execution of a team objective - Problem-solving and initiative - Reflection on team performance and behaviour.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors or Group Leaders: Lead and manage the activity safely - Select challenges appropriate to the group - Conduct risk assessments and make go/no-go decisions - Inspect equipment and activity areas before use - Deliver safety briefings - Explain the objective and rules of each 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.

Where the activity is group-led, the Group Leader assumes responsibility for participant health and safety during the activity.

Challenge Wall: The Challenge Wall and any other activity requiring specific AOEC training must not be used unless the activity leader has completed the required AOEC training. Where the activity is group-led, the Group Leader assumes responsibility for participant health and safety during the activity.

Supervising Adults: Retain duty of care for students at all times - Actively supervise participants - Follow activity leader instructions - Monitor participant behaviour, physical wellbeing, and interactions - 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 before beginning each challenge - Work cooperatively and respectfully with others - Use equipment appropriately - Respect personal space and physical boundaries - Stop immediately when instructed by the Activity Leader - Respect the activity space and equipment.

6. Group size & Ratios

- Minimum supervision requirements: One competent activity leader.
- Supervising adult: Supervising adults may help run the individual challenges or rotate with the small groups. Ideally one adult per team.
- Team challenges are generally most effective with approximately 6 participants per team. Groups may be rotated through different challenges where multiple activities are being run.
- Ratios may be increased depending on participant age, confidence, group size, environmental conditions, or additional support requirements.

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 sufficient space is available for the selected challenge.

Set up equipment according to the requirements of the activity.

Ensure equipment is stable and positioned appropriately.

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

7.3 Weather & Environmental Conditions

Outdoor conditions must be assessed before and during the activity. The Group Leader or Activity Leader must consider:

- Weather conditions.
- Ground conditions.
- Wet, slippery, unstable, or otherwise hazardous surfaces.

Activities must be modified, relocated, postponed, or cancelled where conditions make participation unsafe.

7.4 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

7.5 Other Requirements

The Group Leader must consider whether each challenge is appropriate for the participants physical and psychological. Participants should never be pressured to undertake a physical or contact-based challenge if they are uncomfortable or unable to safely participate.

8. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • The purpose and objectives of the activity. | • The importance of communication and listening. |
| • The rules of the challenges and how equipment is to be used. | • For challenges involving physical contact, participants must understand that contact should be respectful, appropriate, and limited to what is required by the activity. |
| • Behaviour expectations. | |

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

9. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Participants remain within the designated activity area.
- Participants follow the agreed rules. Equipment is used only for its intended purpose.
- The Activity Leader monitors participant behaviour and wellbeing.
- The Activity Leader may modify rules or introduce scenarios to meet the objectives of the group.
- Activity must be stopped if safety is compromised.

10. 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 participants are accounted for before leaving the activity area.
- All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.

11. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Leave no Trace. Leave the area as it was found.
- Report any damages to AOEC Management.
- Respect nature and its wildlife. No harming any creatures like spiders or wetas.

12. Debrief

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

- What worked well for your team?
- How did you communicate?
- Who took on leadership roles?
- Did everyone have an opportunity to contribute?
- What happened when your first plan did not work?
- How did the team respond to challenges?
- What could you have done differently?
- What did you learn about working as a team?

The debrief should focus on learning, teamwork, communication, and positive reflection rather than simply which team completed a challenge fastest.

Tyre Shift

Activity Instruction

Transfer the 5 tyres stacked in order of size on Pole No 1 to Pole No 2 and then to Pole No 3 and back again. Time the activity and see if it can be completed faster the second time around.

Resources

- 3 poles at the location
- 5 tyres in varying sizes
- a phone with a Stop Watch
- Team members and their collective brain

Briefing

You are required to move all the tyres from Pole No 1 to Pole No 2 and then to Pole No 3 and back following the rules. Each group completes the exercise as quickly as possible over 2 attempts.

Rules

1. The tyres cannot be moved to another pole unless all the tyres are stacked on the previous pole.
2. Tyres must be passed between team members.
3. No team member can walk or run while in contact with a tyre, however one netball step is permitted.
4. 2 people must lift a tyre off the post. 2 people must place a tyre on the post.
5. When the tyres are not on a pole, they must be in contact with a team member. Tyres can not to be thrown or rolled

Risk

- Mind your nose and head while you lift the tires from the poles.

Tram Tracks

Activity Instruction

The whole group must move from one end of the tram tracks to the platform on the other side using only the posts provided.

Resources

Up to 6 Posts

Briefing

You are required to move from one end of the tram tracks to the platform on the opposite side. There are only 6 posts available to help you build a bridge across. Be aware of the fragility of the construction and the possibility and consequence of collapse. Consider your team mates

Rules

1. The team must move down the centre of the tracks, on the posts only
2. No one may walk on the ground or on the tracks themselves.
3. The posts may not be placed on the tracks and the group walk on those.
4. No one may walk adjacent to the tracks helping in the execution of the exercise, however, within reason, this is permitted to aid team members with limited balancing skills.
5. There is no extra equipment to be used in this exercise.

Teacher/Instructor Notes

Facilitators should be aware but not inform the group that the tram tracks are not parallel.

Be aware of the safety issues. Protect those with limited balance. Be aware of the fragility of your construction and the possibility and consequence of collapse. The rules provide an objective to be met with the safety of all involved.

Risk

- Carelessness can cause inadvertent slips and ankles can be damaged, heads can be knocked while posts are being moved, egos can be bent if some team members ignore other team members.
- Bouncing on the posts break them and should be discouraged.
- When wet, the tracks and poles may become slippery and too dangerous to use.

Lava Flow

Activity Instruction

Construct a bridge and cross the lava within the bounds of the rules and work as a team. Move the entire group across a lava without touching the lava

Resources

3 - 5 Planks

Briefing

You are required to cross a lava. Luckily there are chunks of rock rising above the lava. There are initially only 3 planks available to help you build a bridge across the flow. Add or reduce the number of planks - 3 is the minimum, 5 the maximum.

Rules

1. The rocks protruding through the lava are part of the planet and cannot be moved.
2. Nothing at all may touch the lava.
3. If any members of your team touch the lava, by accident or otherwise, this person must start again from the beginning. They are deemed burned and cannot take part again until completing a 1-minute healing period.
4. No plank can touch the lava. If however it comes into contact with the lava, the group has to the count of 3 (or longer at the group leaders discretion, depending on the capabilities of the group) to rescue the plank or it must be returned to the start. If a plank comes in contact with the lava more than 3 times, it is burned to a cinder and you will lose the use of that plank.
5. No person can stand in the lava. Suicides and sacrificing members is not permissible.

Solution

The first inclination of the group is to place a plank diagonally across from one rock to another. They don't always fit. The solution may be to place the plank across the 2 rocks, then another forming a 'T' to the next rock.

Risk

- Carelessness can cause inadvertent slips and ankles can be damaged, heads can be knocked while planks are being moved, egos can be bent if some team members ignore other team members.
- Bouncing on the planks may break them and should be discouraged.

Spot Maze

Activity Instruction

Navigate the entire group one at a time through the maze of stepping stones, without making a noise or stepping off.

Resources

This challenge is a grid of blocks.

Optional Resources: A bucket of water with sponges - The sponges can be thrown at any person telling or indicating to another the secret stone.

Briefing

This is a memory exercise. The group must cross the maze one block at a time. There is a secret path across the maze. Everyone has to remember the secret path for themselves. As the first team member steps on a square, the facilitator gives the thumbs up or thumbs down. Following the thumbs up, the team member may try a new square. If not successful, the team member goes to the back of the line and the next person attempts to cross the maze.

Ensure the team understands the exercise before they start. As it is a memory exercise, it pays for each individual member to pay attention while attempting to cross the maze. Once started, the no noise rule will be in force.

Rules

1. Every member of the team must start from the same side and cannot go to the other side without crossing the maze
2. There is to be no sound made by the group at all.
3. Using articles to mark the trail is not permitted.
4. Team Members must cross the maze one block at a time.
5. The group members must keep in strict sequence when taking turns on the path.

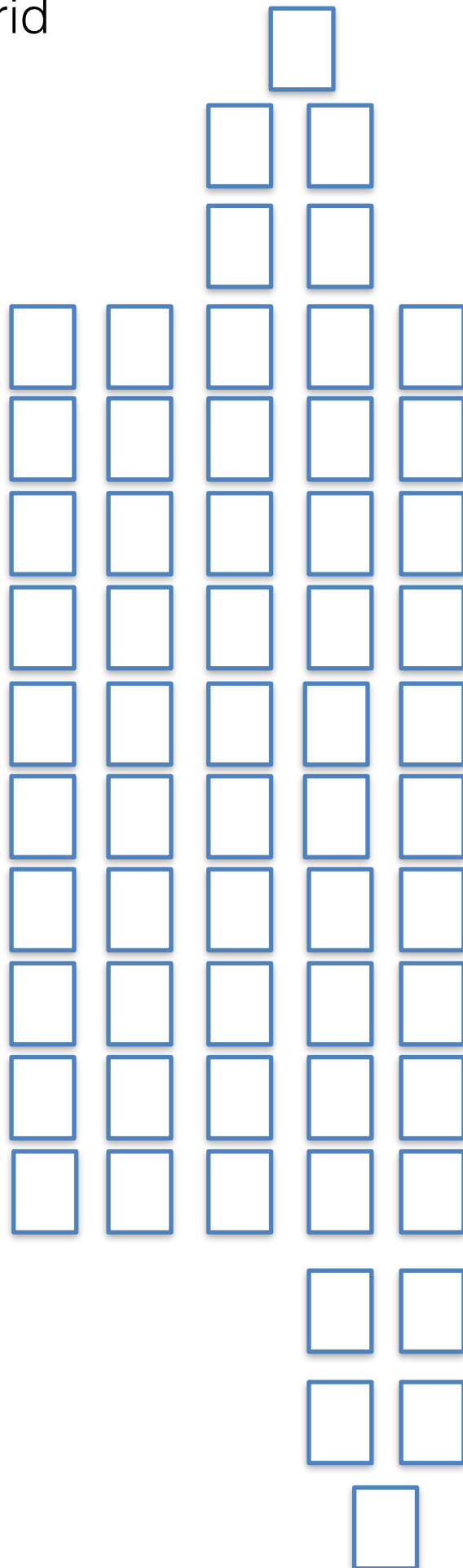
Option 1: If not successful, the team member goes to the back of the line and a new team member must attempt the maze. There can be only one person on the path at a time.

Option 2: With each successive thumbs up, the group moves through the maze with one person standing on each successful square. However, if a thumbs down is given, the whole group must go back.

Teacher/Instructor Notes

Allow time to set up the stepping stones as per grid below. On the grid mark the squares that form the secret path. Participants see only see a blank maze. Remember you make the rules; you enforce them, but never change them.

Spot Maze Grid



Stacker

Activity Instruction

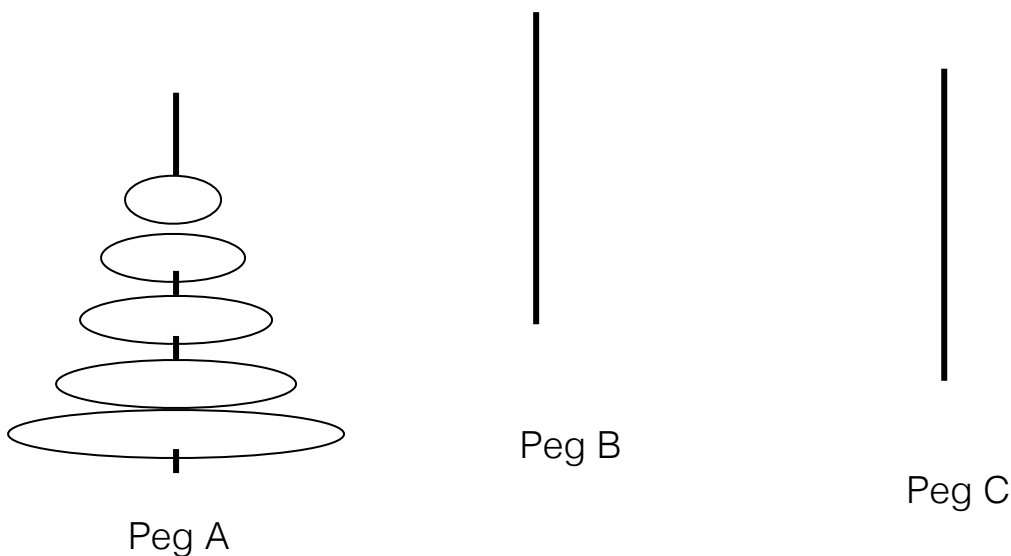
Transfer the 5 discs on peg A to peg C, within the rules, so that they are stacked as on peg A. The minimum number of moves is 31.

Resources

This activity consists of 5 coloured disks and 3 poles.

Briefing

The group has to transfer 5 discs stacked in order of size on Peg A to Peg C within the rules.



Rules

1. Only 1 disc can be moved at a time
2. The next disc can only be moved once the previous disc is stationary on a peg.
3. A larger disc cannot be stacked upon a smaller disc.

Balancing Pole

Activity Instruction

To walk your group across the balancing pole without touching the ground, passing another person coming from the other end.

Resources

Balancing Pole (Team Building Arena)

Briefing

You are required walk across the balancing pole from one end to the other. Half the group stand on one end of the pole facing the other half of the group on the other end. You are required to change ends without touching the ground.

Rules

1. If anyone touches the ground they must start again from their end of the pole.
2. You can only pass one person at a time

Teacher/Instructor Notes

- Give several turns.
- Before each turn let them discuss what happened and how to improve their performance

Variation

When they have developed some skill try to do it as fast as possible.

Risk

- The perceived level of risk is low because of the height of the activity,
- Carelessness can cause inadvertent slips and ankles can be damaged,

Pipe Line

Activity Instruction

Participants must roll a golf ball (or water) down the pipeline along a given course

Resources

several half pipes and a golf ball

Briefing

Participants are given half pipes and must form a pipeline to roll a golf ball down the pipeline, following the given course.

Rules

1. If using a ball, Pipes cannot touch each other. If water is used Pipes must be connected
2. The person holding the rail containing the ball cannot move
3. Once the ball has left a piece of pipe that person must move to the front of the course or pass the pipe onto a person without a pipe to move to the front of the pipeline
4. The group must work together

Teacher/Instructor Notes

- The challenge can be timed and repeated
- Before each turn let them discuss what happened and how to improve their performance

Variation

- Several golf balls can be used
- Instead of a golf ball, water can be used to run down the pipeline. Use a water jug to pour and to catch and measure the water at the other end. Repeat and aim for improvements.

Tarp Flip

Activity Instruction

A seemingly simple task. While standing on top of a completely open tarp, the group must create a plan to get everyone on the opposite side of the tarp without stepping off.

Resources

1 Tarp

Rules

1. No one can step off the tarp
2. The group must work together as a team

Teacher/Instructor Notes

- The challenge can be timed and repeated
- Before each turn let them discuss what happened and how to improve their performance

Variation

- The tarp can be folded into a smaller shape to make the activity more challenging

Team Challenge Wall

This challenge can not be used without AOEC induction

Activity Instruction

The whole group must get over the wall without the use of any props

Resources

Team Challenge Wall

Briefing

The whole group must get over the wall. This must be achieved working as a team (it is not about a single person managing to get over the wall by themselves).

Rules

1. No props can be used
2. The group must work together as a team
3. Three other members are required to support the one attempting to get over the wall.
4. Spotting commands must be used
5. No one can jump down the other end. Descend must be completed as team work and works the same as the ascent.

Teacher/Instructor Notes

- The challenge can be timed and repeated
- Before each turn let them discuss what happened and how to improve their performance

Risk

- The height of the activity.
- Be mindful of the participants falling

DO NOT remove segments from the Wall to change the height.
This must be done by AOEC Staff

Team Building- 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
	- Incorrect/unsafe use of the wall - Lack of Support (spotting) on the challenge wall - Too many people on top - Jumping down/back sliding down the wall		- Major injury - Minor Injury		6	- Group support and students spotting each other to get each person up and down the wall. - Face the wall going up and down - Two people max on the wall at once	2
	Failure to disclose risks		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Damage to equipment		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. Items can not be added/ taken to the wall.	2
	Participants not paying attention		- Minor Injury - Passer-by Safety		4	- Include everyone in the group so they are focus - Brief adult/group on individual activity hazards, carrying planks, watching out for others	2
	Lack of team work		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Damage to equipment		6	- Good Team work - Good/Positive Communication - Good Leadership	3
	Inappropriate clothing and footwear		Minor Injury		6	Participants are not allowed without proper covered shoes. Dress for the weather conditions.	2
	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
	Group too big/too small		- Frustration/boredom - Minor Injury - Damage to equipment		4	- Ensure their are enough activities and enough supervisors for teams of 4-8 - Participants must be supervised - Keep away from an activity area while another team is working	2
	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	Participants are not allowed without proper covered shoes. Dress for the weather conditions.	3
	Slippery equipment & trip hazard		Minor Injury		6	Wait for equipment to dry after rain, store gear out of the weather and where it wont be tripped over	2
	Removing parts of equipment		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Damage to Equipment		9	- Only AOEC Staff are allowed to remove or add wall segments. - Do not remove gear from the team building area	3
	Damaged, worn equipment		- Major injury - Minor Injury - Damage to Equipment		6	- Team Building equipment and area is monthly inspection include wood chip. - Equipment is removed from the activity to be fixed if damaged.	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
	Uneven wood chip surface and trip hazards		Minor injury		3	No need for running, hazards are pointed out eg. Lava rocks, train tracks	2
	Wasps		- Minor Injury - Major injury - Death		6	Report any sightings of wasp, carry first aid kit and Wasp Spray	3

	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

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 at 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
	Incident & Accident Reporting	- Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	- Report to AOEC Management - Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station