Creating a Culture of Risk Management

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OVERLAND

180 Leaders, Ages 19 to 29
10 Days of Leader Training
6 Weeks of Programs

Lightning storm at training

Staff camp on a field during training

1. Mix of seasoned leaders and new staff
2. Mix of experienced and inexperienced backpackers
3. Mix of programs they will lead (indoor, frontcountry, backcountry)
4. A strong storm rolls in at 2am
5. Staff don't know what to do (stay in tents, go indoors?) or how to communicate with each other during the storm

Lightning storm at training

Our response:

- The next morning full-time staff meet to discuss before breakfast
- Check in with other leaders at breakfast
- Assign an office point person for overnight storms
- All staff meeting after breakfast (what happened, what are the risks, what should you do in the future)
- Review storm policy later in the day

Near miss in Costa Rica

Leaders decide to bring their group of 12 students to a swimming hole in Costa Rica

1. Overland had not been here before
2. There's a strong current due to heavy rains
3. The student was not a strong swimmer
4. Miscommunication between the leaders
5. Leaders were not in a position to provide help
6. The weak swimmer is eager to jump in
7. He does, and no one is prepared for what happens

Near miss in Costa Rica

Our response:

- Gather facts from leaders, students and families
- Review with full-time staff and others within industry
- Consider revisions to our policy
- We incorporate throw rope training into our leader training & review this incident with all of our leaders

Desired Effects of Our Response

1. Model openness, awareness & concern

2. Include input from leaders

3. Cite expert analysis

4. Follow through with a clear policy

Safety Culture

"The shared values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms which may govern organizational decision making, as well as individual and group attitudes about safety."

[1]Ciavarelli, Anthony P. *Safety Climate and Risk Culture: How Does Your Organization Measure Up?* Human Factors Associates, Inc., 2007. Available online at http://high-reliability. org/Safety_Climate.pdf.

A Culture of Risk Management

Leaders

"Leader training begins at the interview."

Returning Leader Talks (RLTs)

In-person debriefs…

…share parent and student feedback

…review incidents and near misses

Creating a culture of risk management

Leaders

1. Set the tone from the start
2. Veteran leaders teach aspects of risk management at training
3. Follow-up in person at the end of the season

Creating a culture of risk management

"I've never felt more trusted, and that's due to the way the office treats the leaders. That trust gives us confidence to do our best work."

Participants

OVERLAND
SUMMER CAMPS FOR 4TH – 12TH GRADERS

ABOUT   TRIPS   LEADERS

Preparing for Biking

Daily rides on Pacific Coast average 45 miles over varying terrain. Four to five days will be over 50 miles and the longest day is approximately 55 to 70 miles (the exact mileage may vary by group). There are one to two buffer days included in the itinerary, to allow for delays en route (most groups will find that they spend these buffer days partially or completely off of the bikes) and an additional two days off the bikes to go rafting.

Overland bicycle tours are self-contained—there is no van support. You will carry all of your belongings, plus some group gear and food, on a sturdy rack mounted over the back wheel of your bike. You will hang panniers (these are saddlebags, pronounced "pan-yers") off the rack and attach gear like your sleeping bag and sleeping pad to the top of the rack using bungee cords. On average, you will carry between 30 and 40 lbs of equipment on your bike (not including the weight of your bike).

While there is always a range of physical ability and fitness in each group, it's important that you follow our training schedule and that you take the time to gain confidence on a bike—mounting and dismounting, shifting gears, braking and making turns. We expect you to prepare adequately so you can keep up physically and participate in all of your group's activities.
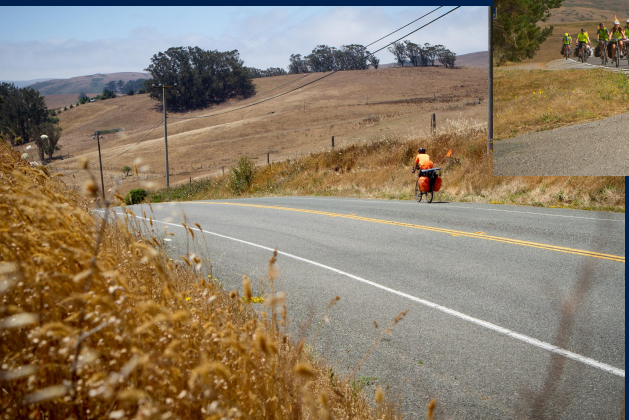
PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY
Pacific Coast

Manage participant expectations...

...before the program begins.

THE GROUP FIRST

At Overland, the group always comes first. By valuing teamwork, students learn critical leadership skills. Simple things, like waiting for each other at meals or doing more than your fair share, lead to important lessons that stretch far beyond the boundaries of the summer.

APPROPRIATE CHALLENGES

Every Overland program is a set of carefully crafted challenges with clearly defined goals: bike a coast, hike a mountain, serve a community, learn a language. The challenges are carefully calibrated and the goal is always to have fun and make friends along the way.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

We expect a lot of our students—from playing by the rules, to helping out and having a positive attitude. The obvious is prohibited—smoking, drinking and drugs—but more than that, we strive to create wholesome and enthusiastic groups where students feel welcomed and valued.

Hold participants to your standards...

….throughout the program.

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Expect participants to actively engage in safety procedures and practices...

...from the start.

Creating a culture of risk management

Group management as risk management

1. Manage participant expectations
2. Hold participants to your standards
3. Give students a role in safety procedures

"Throughout the summer there was a lot of pressure from the office to summit fourteeners. The office seemed disappointed when we weren't able to do Quandary peak."

"We wanted Overland to challenge Will, push him outside of his comfort zone and to have him experience leadership training in a different context. Instead, it seems that the obstacles overcame the group! It seemed to him that fear governed many situations. It sounded that every attempt was made to AVOID challenges."

Creating a culture of risk management

1. Model behavior that reflects & reinforces organizational values.

2. Staff (and participants) are active players in risk management.

3. Manage participant expectations and hold them to your standards.

Promoting a culture of risk management

- ❏ Encourage leaders to report incidents & near misses
- ❏ Review incidents & near misses with your leaders
- ❏ Incorporate lessons from incident reviews into staff training
- ❏ Solicit leader feedback in planning and operations
- ❏ Expect students to recognize and manage risks
- ❏ Allow leaders to teach risk management lessons from their own leading experience
- ❏ Practice what you preach

Additional Reading

Ajango, Deb. Lessons Learned II: Using Case Studies and History to Improve Safety Education. Safety Education for Outdoor and Remote Work Environments, 2005.

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