

Avon Outdoor Activity Club Health and Safety Policy

Frequently Asked Questions– Activity Leaders

I am an unpaid and volunteer Activity Leader, why should I comply with the club's health and safety policy?

Given that it does not have employees, AOAC is not automatically covered by workplace health and safety legislation. The club has researched good practice and implemented a policy which will protect members from harm. If you wish to know more about the legal context of the policy or your responsibilities as an activity leader, please contact either policies@aoac.co.uk or activities@aoac.co.uk.

Why does the club ask Activity Leaders to assess activity risks?

When leading an activity, Activity Leaders are autonomous and free to decide how best to manage the participating group. This involves considerable responsibility. As described in the club H&S policy, Activity Leaders can refuse members the opportunity to participate if they arrive unprepared or fail to comply with safety instructions and it is up to the Member to inform the Activity Leader of any pre-existing health condition which may affect their ability to participate. However, the responsibility for assessing risks which are intrinsic to the activity, weather or terrain lies with the Activity Leader. If you wish to know more about the legal context of the policy or your responsibilities as an activity leader, please contact either policies@aoac.co.uk or activities@aoac.co.uk.

Why does the club recommend that Activity Leaders keep and share documentary evidence of risk assessment?

The club's most experienced leaders will already be familiar and comfortable with the principles of risk assessment. New and recently-trained Activity Leaders may be less confident. In the context of outdoor activities, both prior risk assessment (of risks which can be identified in advance) and dynamic risk assessment (to identify risks that emerge during the course of an activity) are important. For example, prior risk assessment would identify hypothermia as a risk of hiking in alpine conditions. A leader dynamically assessing risks during an activity would revise the planned route (or turn back) in the event of dangerous, inclement weather which arrives unexpectedly.

All activity leaders are encouraged to forward a copy of any prior risk assessment to policies@aoac.co.uk. It will be filed in a secure location and feedback can be provided.

You must also feel confident of your ability to dynamically assess the risks of an activity before leading an activity for AOAC.

An archive of generic risk assessments are maintained here;

<http://www.aoac.co.uk/risk-assessments>

These can provide the starting point for an Activity Leader's risk assessment for many common activities though it would also be necessary to consider and include any risks which might specifically apply to the planned activity.

Many experienced Activity Leaders and members of the Club Committee will be able and willing to provide help and advice to new Activity Leaders undertaking risk assessment for the first time. Sport Coordinators and the Club Committee monitor the effectiveness of club policy on risk assessment on an ongoing basis.

Who can I approach for more information?

Nick Walker, the club policy officer policies@aoac.co.uk will be happy to answer your questions.