

The first step in planning an outdoor trip for a group of people is to consider what they would enjoy and get the most benefit out of. The most important part of this in a school situation is to determine the educational goals for this trip. This is related to the philosophy of what outdoor education is all about. Another danger is that the nature of the environment.

Hypothermia is a real risk on the mountain with injuries and losing a person also being major possibilities to consider. To try and reduce these risks a gear list with all the necessary warm clothing, such as, gloves, thermals, beanies and other important gear should be put out allowing enough time for participants to borrow gear they might not have already have. It is important that the person organising the trip checks by sighting that the student has this list of required gear. This might be the teacher's job or the parent's job at home. The risks of not being pre-prepared should be explained to the students by the teacher before they go on the trip so that the correct gear is brought. If students are informed then they are more likely to bring the correct gear as they will be aware of what could happen if they don't. Being warm with the correct gear will make the student feel better and more comfortable and will make them more emotionally safe.

Another thing which is important in an outdoor environment such as this is the use of mobilephones while on the mountain. As the participants will not be skiing in a big group together, cell phone use is important in maintaining contact between the different skiing groups and also for emergency situations which may occur. Students should be made aware of the safety issues surrounding the use of mobile phones, and should understand the importance of using them in the right way and not contacting those outside of the trip (specifically parents or friends) of anything that may happen without the permission of a trip supervisor, which can cause issues of misinterpretation when contacted too early and not all the details are known.

With all these safety issues, there are also some things which should be done both before leaving for the trip and while away to reduce some of the risks. A few trips will be made to Snow Planet to get some preliminary lessons and introduce some of those who may be more nervous to a shallower slope rather than throwing them in the deep end on the side of the mountain, which is a bit steeper. The class should also be asked to give an indication of current ability levels so they can be put into groups of similar skill, reducing the risk of some members feeling uncomfortable as they are at a lower ability level of the others in the group, while also reducing the risk of some more advanced skiers becoming bored with people who are at a more basic level. This will help with the emotional safety as well as physical safety of the students. For example you will not be thrown on to a black run at the beginning of the first day if you are not a competent skier and if you have skied before then you will be doing runs which will challenge you and are lessen the chance of the perceived risk associated with skiing. We will check the ability level of the instructors and the safety guidelines and procedures of the organizations we will be dealing with (so Mt Ruapehu),Every morning the weather on the mountain should be checked on the Mt Ruapehu website (also before leaving in the vans to check travelling weather), along with checking what parts of the mountain are open or for any extreme weather warnings which could put the group in danger. Along with that, as the weather on the mountain is extremely changeable, a careful eye should be kept out for changing weather by an experienced supervisor who has been on mountains numerous times in the past. The students in the group should also be briefed beforehand on the nature of the weather

and what they should be looking out for while they're skiing or snowboarding, along with ways to get down the mountain or to safety in bad weather or other situations.

When going into an outdoor activity which is provided by a company or group, they also have some safety management regulations in place to help ensure there are no accidents by those participating. In this case Mt Ruapehu group does many things to make the mountain environment safer for the skiers, snowboarders and trampers who regularly use its services. This is important as they are often the people who have the greatest knowledge of the amount of risk present on the mountain and have the largest amount of experience on how to reduce these risks while still making the activities enjoyable for those who take part. Many people who go on the mountain (especially family groups or tourists who have come from overseas) are inexperienced in safety in such harsh environments and so require safety precautions to be put into place or to supply them with the knowledge in order to be safe while doing activities on Mt Ruapehu. They are responsible for grading the roads on the mountain to make the surface of the roads less slippery and safer to drive on, providing weather reports that are updated regularly, avalanche control, trail markings and signage of boundaries, trail and lift clearances and maintenance of ski hire equipment. Additional services are the regular ski area sweeps and first aid and emergency services which they provide in case that something out of their control does happen. They also have staff working consistently on the mountain to ensure safety, such as people on the lifts and people patrolling the field to make sure people are not endangered by other users.

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Wider implications

It is important to consider the wider implications that could arise if they are not managed properly, not only will the students on the trip be affected but many others. The most important issue and the one that may have widest implications is if someone were to die. Without managing many of the factors listed in the RAMs form the issue of someone dying may arise leading to many people being affected. If tragedy did occur – such as one of the students dying of hypothermia, many recriminations would be raised followed by many questions. Such a tragedy would affect others students in the class as they may become mentally affected. An event like this may require the students to undergo counseling in order to cope with such a tragedy....The family would need to be informed, and losing a loved one is one of the most terrible things that could happen. The family would be distraught and what to know the detail of what happened... The trip may have to be reviewed before taking place in future years and if the teacher was somehow involved in the tragedy through lack of planning or forms then there may be an investigation into their conduct and if they are found at fault then they may lose their teaching position. The people running the activities on the mountain may also be investigated which would have an effect on customer sales or even being shut down. Profit may be lost and many may be out of a job and receiving not income for a period of time, possibly for a while as jobs are hard to come by. Nationally the event may cause less people to visit the mountain reducing the amount of overseas and local visitors. This means rental shops and cafes could lose profits possibly causing them to shut down. This would mean fewer jobs for local living in the region, and therefore could easily affect everyone living in the area.

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I think the most important issue when planning an outdoor activity is to have all the paper work filled out and RAMs forms completed so that everyone is aware of the risks that are involved. With knowledge of what risks can occur and how these can be addressed or minimized then this will make the trip a lot safer for all those involved.

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