

# **DRAFT STANDARDS for the PROVISION of OVERSEAS EXPEDITIONS for YOUNG PERSONS**

This document has been produced by a Working Group of commercial companies and EPA (Expedition Providers Association) in order for Providers to adopt a minimum set of standards for expeditions, to which clients can refer when selecting a Provider.

The group was called together by the DfES as part of the proposals that each sector of the Outdoor Industry should have a 'Badge' that would inform potential clients of the standards to which a third party commercial Provider operates.

**The Working Group consists of members of the Expedition Providers Association (Adventure Lifesigns, Adventureworks, Outlook Expeditions, Wilderness Expertise), World Challenge and a representative of other organisations from EPA.**

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The working group and other EPA members hope to sign up to these Standards as a common code of working practice early in 2007. The group will then work towards a scheme of accreditation by a credible third party by the end of 2007.

# **STANDARDS for THE PROVISION OF OVERSEAS EXPEDITIONS for YOUNG PERSONS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This document has been produced by a Working Group of commercial companies and EPA (Expedition Providers Association) in order for Providers to adopt a minimum set of standards for expeditions, which clients can refer to when selecting a Provider.

The Working Group consists of members of the Expedition Providers Association (Adventure Lifesigns, Adventureworks, Outlook Expeditions, Wilderness Expertise), World Challenge and a representative of other organisations from EPA.

The document has its roots in the publications listed in Annex A. It has also been consulted on widely through a number of organisations listed in Annex B.

The standards described in this document are not definitive and it is recognised that some expeditions may be outside the scope of the criteria set down here due to the specific needs of the group or the expedition itinerary. If this is the case then clients should agree the standards and criteria with the company involved. The aim is to demonstrate due diligence and in order to assess quality, one must look at both the Provider, the Leader Team, the programme and the client group as they are equally important in ensuring quality and safety.

## DEFINITIONS

*Provider* – A commercial company that is responsible for the provision of an Overseas Expedition for school and youth groups.

*Accredited Provider* – A Provider that has shown themselves to be, in safety and quality terms, up to the minimum standards set out in this document.

*Expedition* – overseas travel that involves a deliberate element of risk, challenge or adventure and requires specialist skills for its safe management.

*Higher Duty of Care* (sometimes referred to as `Technical Duty of Care`) - A person who is deemed, at any point, to have greater experience or qualifications in aspects of, or entire activities that are taking place and therefore is seen to have decision-making primacy over others in terms of `Duty of Care`.

*Duty of Care* - An obligation that a sensible person would have in the circumstances when acting towards others. If the actions of a person are not made with care, attention, caution, and prudence, their actions are considered negligent. Consequently, the resulting damages may be claimed as negligence in a legal action.

*Client* – The individual/school/organisation with whom the Provider is contracted to provide a service.

*Leader* – A competent, qualified, appropriate and experienced person that the Provider has selected and appointed.

*Accompanying Adult* – An adult member of the expedition, normally a member of school/client organisation staff, or an adult appointed to fulfill that role.

*Expedition Assistant* – An additional adult appointed by the Provider, required to ensure that correct supervisory ratios are achieved, or where a female or male are required to achieve gender balance.

*Leader Team* – A group of adults responsible for the welfare and care of the team whilst overseas. This consists of the leader appointed by the Provider and one or more adults, normally a teacher from the client group.

*Medical Practitioner* - A doctor who possesses a medical degree and who is registered with the General Medical Council (GMC).

*Safety Management System* – a comprehensive set of policies procedures and practices laid down and carried out by the Provider in pursuit of best practice.

*Competent Person* - a suitably experienced, qualified member of the Provider's organization and is defined as a `Competent Person`.

*Relevant Experience and Transferable Skills* - relates to previous transferable experience of operating in a similar environment to that of the intended expedition destination.

## **1 THE PROVIDER – DUE DILIGENCE**

1.1 Providers shall offer clients evidence that the company operates to minimum standards and that any monies paid to that company are safe.

1.2 Evidence shall include:

- a. A portfolio of Liability Insurance that comprehensively covers all UK and overseas activities.
- b. Air Travel Organisers License (ATOL).
- c. Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) License for UK activities, which fall under the licensing remit.
- d. An enhanced level of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.
- e. Full compliance with Package Tour Regulations (1992).

## **2 HEALTH AND SAFETY STATEMENT**

2.1 Providers are committed to ensuring that all reasonable measures are taken in order to assure their clients of the highest level of safety throughout their activities. Providers shall achieve this by:

- a. Establishing and maintaining a written Health and Safety policy statement.
- b. Facilitating and promoting a positive Health and Safety culture.
- c. Ensuring that the minimum standards as detailed in this document are met by their individual safety management system.
- d. Employing an in-date, written, recognised and robust Risk Assessment / Incident Management process.
- e. Ensuring that all equipment is checked, maintained and serviced to recognised and appropriate standards.

## **3 SAFETY MANAGEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

The Provider shall:

- a. Formulate a safety management system.
- b. Appoint competent persons to oversee and implement the system.

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- c. Establish effective monitoring and feedback systems.
- d. Review trends, incidents and accidents.
- e. Review and update the safety management system as necessary.

### **4 DUTY OF CARE**

4.1 This document acknowledges that there is a distinction between the 'technical' and 'pastoral' Duty of Care owed to participants. This document further acknowledges that there may be occasions where the principal Duty of Care falls to one party, known as 'Higher Duty of Care, or where this is a shared responsibility.

4.2 The responsibility for the Duty of Care (both technical and pastoral) of participants for all periods during the activities shall be agreed with the Provider and Leader Team in advance of the activities taking place, and shall be clearly documented.

4.3 This documentation shall either appear in the organisation's overall policies, or shall be specifically documented on an individual activity basis.

4.4 The Provider shall explain to all parties as necessary the risks involved during the expedition.

### **5 CODE OF CONDUCT**

5.1 The Provider shall have an established expedition Code of Conduct that is agreed with the client and parent/guardian. This shall take into account both the nature of the team and the expedition destination.

5.2 This Code of Conduct shall include the Providers expectations and responsibilities and conduct of the Leader Team and Leader(s).

5.3 All participants are expected to adhere to the Provider's Code of Conduct. Providers reserve the right to take appropriate action if participants fail to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

### **6 PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UK**

6.1 The Provider shall comply with 'The Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995', and shall hold a valid license issued by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) for those activities undertaken within the UK.

6.2 Where the Provider is not legally required to hold an Adventure Activities License because the activities undertaken are out of scope of 'The Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995', the Provider shall adopt systems and procedures which are up to the minimum standards of those required by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, or appropriate regulations and procedures as laid down by the relevant Governing Body for all UK activities.

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6.3 A level of adequate pre-expedition training shall be delivered, appropriate to the skills used during the expedition itinerary.

6.4 The Provider shall carry out extensive research on the destination's safety, stability and security before departure.

6.5 The Provider shall take all reasonable steps to provide an alternative destination in the event of unavoidable cancellation.

## 7 EXPEDITION LEADER SELECTION

7.1 This document considers the competence of the Expedition Leader (the 'Leader') to be the single most important factor in protecting the Health and Safety of participants involved in overseas expeditions. As such, the competence of the Provider to accurately assess Leader competence is paramount.

7.2 The Provider shall assign a Leader for the expedition who has been assessed as competent (see 7.4 and Annex C Leader Matrix)

7.3 Unless in exceptional circumstances, the Leader shall be appointed and able to meet the team within a time scale that takes account of 7.4 – 7.7. This shall be within a minimum timeframe of 4 months before departure. An appropriately qualified reserve Leader shall be available in the event that they are needed.

7.4 Assessment of Leader Competence shall be undertaken by, and shall be the responsibility of a suitably experienced, qualified member of the Provider's organisation who is defined as a 'Competent Person'.

The Competent Person shall always:

- a. Have current and documented experience of leading expeditions of a similar type to that which the Leader being assessed is proposing to lead;
- b. Have current knowledge of the geographical, political and cultural region concerned;
- c. Have in-date and credible experience in leadership and people management in the expedition environment.

7.5 The Competent Person shall use a combination of methods of assessing Leader competence. This shall always include:

- a. An interview;
- b. A review of documented current experience;
- c. Checks on in-date original certificates of qualifications. Where it is not possible to view original certificates, the Provider shall undertake appropriate checks with the relevant National Governing Body.

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- d. Following up of at least 2 references. These shall be gained from persons who have worked with them in the outdoors/expedition/youth development environment;
- e. An assessment of the Leader's competencies relevant to the requirements of Expedition Leadership (independent of any National Governing Body awards held by the Leader). This shall involve observation of the Leader ideally working with the group of young people that he or she is intending to lead (or at least of the target age group), in a leadership capacity.
- f. An enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau for suitability to work with young people. This shall include List 99 and PoCA lists.

7.6 The Competent Person may use other appropriately qualified Competent Persons to assist with the task of assessing Leader competence, but shall retain the ultimate responsibility as stated in 7.9.

7.7 Leader competence shall be based on a combination of experience, qualifications, character, training, and management skills appropriate to the specific expedition, and shall take account of all relevant factors.

These factors shall include, but are not limited to, the proposed:

- a. Expedition itinerary;
- b. Characteristics and nature of the team;
- c. Technical activities;
- d. Geographical environment;
- e. Cultural environment;
- f. Number of group members;
- g. Ages, levels of responsibility and maturity of group members;
- h. Medical or other needs of group members;
- i. Number and competence of support staff;
- j. Emergency procedures and back-up systems.
- k. Similar environment/regional/geographical experience

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7.8 Where assessing competence to lead technical activities, the Competent Person shall either:

- a. Hold a valid National Governing Body qualification at the minimum 'Technical Adviser' level as stipulated in HSE L77 'Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations' 1996, appropriate to the activity concerned; or
- b. Hold an equivalent valid UK military qualification which is recognised by MLTUK; or
- c. Engage the services of another person qualified at the above level or higher.

7.9 The Competent Person shall sign and date a 'Leader Statement of Competence' specific to each individual proposed expedition. This shall be a professional judgement made on the part of the Competent Person.

7.10 The Leader shall in all cases:

- a. Possess a 'Statement of Competence', as 7.9 above.
- b. Possess valid and recognized First Aid training, comprising of a minimum of a 16-hour course including an assessed element. Where appropriate the leader shall possess competence that is appropriate to the proposed expedition destination and environment.

7.11 The Provider shall maintain up to date records of Leader, Expedition Adviser and Technical Adviser Competencies. In all cases this shall include details of Leader induction and training, and hard copies in respect of items in 7.5, 7.9 & 7.10 above.

### **Expedition Leader Matrix**

The competence of the Expedition Leader is probably the single most important factor in ensuring a successful and safe expedition. It encompasses a range of core competencies including technical and pastoral responsibilities.

The clients are not normally specialists in the area of overseas expeditions, and as such cannot be expected to have the expertise necessary in order to assess the competence of the Provider's designated Expedition Leader. The Provider shall use the Expedition Leader Matrix to select appropriately qualified Leaders and the client/external bodies may use this as a guide to the suitability of the appointed Leader.

#### The basic principles:

- The Expedition Leader shall be able to demonstrate an appropriate level of competence and experience, in line with current good practice.
- There shall be evidence of the applicant's core competences in line with the matrix through an assessment or judgement, made by a Competent Person.

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The Expedition Leader shall be able to present evidence demonstrating current experience applicable to working with young people in an outdoor and expedition environment to include references and testimonials.

### **8 TEAM PREPARATION**

8.1 The Provider shall ensure that all participants are suitably prepared to take part in the expedition. This shall include:

- a. Establishing a system for ensuring that all adults / team members are mentally and physically suitable to take part in the expedition. This would typically take place during pre-departure training.
- b. Ensuring that all participants have up to date medical clearance and are deemed suitable to participate in the proposed expedition. This shall include a signed statement from a qualified UK Medical Practitioner in respect of each participant.
- c. In consultation with the school, parents and if necessary family doctor, the Provider shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure that any and all relevant pre-existing medical / psychological conditions are disclosed (treated with `Medical in Confidence`).

8.2 Written informed parental consent shall be obtained for all team members. Parents (or those with parental responsibility) shall be fully informed regarding all aspects of the expedition, including but not limited to, those items in 8.3.

8.3 The Provider shall ensure that parents acknowledge and accept that, by its very nature, there will be inherent risks in the expedition (reference 4.4 under Duty of Care).

8.4 The following information shall be made available to all interested parties within a timeframe that shall be agreed between the Provider and the client:

- a. Expedition aims and objectives.
- b. Update on the developing itinerary.
- c. Equipment lists.
- d. Information on fitness preparation.
- e. Medical guidance.
- f. Risk Assessments.
- g. Detailed itineraries.
- h. Emergency procedures.
- i. Communication Systems.

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- j. Additional costs (visas, inoculations, equipment etc).
- k. Responsibilities of the Leader Team.

8.5 In all but exceptional circumstances (see 8.7) the Provider shall ensure that the opportunity exists for the Leader to work in a leadership capacity with members of the team prior to the expedition.

8.6 In all but exceptional circumstances (see 8.7) the participants and parents shall have the opportunity to meet the proposed Leader prior to the expedition taking place.

8.7 An example of an 'exceptional circumstance' would be where a replacement Leader is required following the 'last minute' incapacity of a previously assigned Leader.

8.8 Where a replacement Leader is engaged due to exceptional circumstances, the Provider shall re-evaluate the intended itinerary in conjunction with the replacement Leader, and shall make adjustments if necessary.

## 9 EXPEDITION

9.1 The Provider shall make a professional judgement on the suitability and capability of each participant to undertake specific elements of the proposed expedition. This judgement is based on:

- a. Prior knowledge of the participant, including:
  - i. First-hand experience of the participant;
  - ii. Information from third parties;
  - iii. All relevant medical or other information.
- b. Prior knowledge of the expedition/activity, including:
  - i. The activity itself;
  - ii. The environment (terrain, climate, etc);
  - iii. Contingency plans ("Plan B");
  - iv. The emergency systems, risk assessments and procedures available and in place.

9.2 The resulting information shall be reflected in Risk Assessments and shall be passed onto the Leader prior to the expedition. The Leader shall continue to monitor individuals and make appropriate judgements throughout the expedition.

9.3 The Leader shall supervise the expedition at all times, and where appropriate shall make adjustments to the activity/itinerary to protect the Health and Safety of participants.

9.4 Flexibility, and realistic options (Plan B) shall be built into the itinerary, and shall be used where the Provider or the Leader consider this to be appropriate.

9.5 The Leader shall take account of the number and competence of accompanying support staff prior to each element of the expedition for which he/she has responsibility.

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9.6 There shall be at least one member of staff (from either the Provider or client) of the same sex as the expedition participants. In all but exceptional circumstances the gender balance shall be maintained for the duration of the expedition.

9.7 Providers shall ensure that ratios and supervision is appropriate to the group and the activity being undertaken.

9.8 The expedition planning shall consider the consequences of the incapacity of the Leader; and/or member of the Leader Team.

9.9 The Provider shall maintain a log of details of any accident, incident, or 'near-miss', recording and retaining all such records.

9.10 All accidents, incidents, and 'near-misses' shall be reviewed by the Provider. Where appropriate, the Provider shall take corrective actions (immediate if required) to prevent a similar recurrence of the incident / accident or near-miss.

9.11 For expeditions venturing to extreme environments, Providers shall take responsibility for ensuring that itineraries are constructed to take account of current practices.

9.12 The Provider shall ensure that prior to departure; the Leader is briefed by a Competent Person who is in possession of all knowledge gained of the destination from fact gathering visits and relevant research material. The Leader shall be given all supporting documentation before departure.

9.13 On completion of each expedition there shall be a review to identify any lessons to be learnt.

## **10 EMERGENCIES AND BACK-UP SYSTEMS**

### **In the UK**

10.1 The Provider shall have an established, efficient and reliable 24hrs / 7day UK Emergency on call contact(s) within the UK. All staff shall receive appropriate training to carry out their duties.

10.2 The Provider shall ensure that resources are available to manage all levels of incident/accident (appropriate to the type and number of expeditions in the field at any given time).

10.3 The Provider shall have the ability to transfer required funds overseas at short notice, where these are required for Health and Safety purposes.

10.4 The Provider shall have an Emergency Response Plan (including a Media Management Plan) in operation in the event of a major incident.

### **Whilst overseas**

10.5 In all destinations there shall be a recognised form of incident response including search and rescue.

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### 10.6 Where expeditions take place outside Europe:

- a. The Leader shall have access to a suitable 'in-country' agent or point of contact at all times.
- b. There shall be a system in place for providing the British Embassy or High Commission in the area visited with all relevant documentation relating to each expedition.

### **Communications**

10.7 At all times during the expedition there shall be a guaranteed method of expeditiously summoning assistance in an emergency. In all but exceptional circumstances this shall be two-way communications and this accreditation recognizes that the most efficient method of this, whilst in the field, is via Satellite Phone. However other devices, as listed below may be used to add to the reliability of good communication shall the primary system fail:

- a. Satellite Phone.
- b. Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB).
- c. Personal Locating Beacon (PLB).
- d. Cell (mobile) phone.
- e. Two way Radios.

10.8 If the expedition plan deviates from the itinerary, the Leader shall inform the Provider before the change occurs where possible.

10.9 The Expedition Leader shall contact the Provider where appropriate during the expedition to provide an update on the progress of the team.

### **Medical**

10.10 First Aid provision shall be as stated in 7.10(b).

10.11 The Provider and the Provider's UK Emergency Contact (see 10.1) shall have access to a Medical Practitioner and if possible the ability for that Medical Practitioner to be in communication with the Leader / Staff in the field.

10.12 Participants shall have access to competent medical services and support, including repatriation where required, within the timescale identified in 10.13 below.

10.13 There shall be a clear Emergency Response and Casualty Evacuation Plan detailing appropriate procedures at all stages during the expedition. This shall be agreed between the Provider and Leader Team in advance of the expedition and documented. This shall include details of the nearest hospital or medical facility, methods of transport there and approximate time scales. Documentation shall be available to the team and the UK Emergency Contact at all times.

10.14 General Health and Safety – the team shall receive training pre-departure on personal hygiene and health issues.

## **11 ACCOMMODATION**

11.1 This document acknowledges that due to the nature of overseas expeditions, it is generally neither appropriate nor feasible for Providers to audit accommodation on a centralised basis.

11.2 This document further acknowledges that accommodation (in particular in the Developing World) shall generally not meet the standards expected in the UK.

11.3 This document therefore considers the on going Risk Assessment of accommodation made by the Leader in the field to be the single most important factor in determining its suitability.

11.4 The Leader shall have competence in making such assessment, and shall have received suitable prior instruction/training by the Provider. This instruction/training shall include issues relating to electrical, fire, and personal safety.

11.5 Accommodation shall comply with the appropriate laws in force in the country visited (where these exist).

11.6 Accommodation deemed by the Provider or Leader to be unsuitable for Health and Safety reasons shall not be used by participants.

## **12 TRANSPORT**

12.1 This document acknowledges that due to:

- a. The nature of transport (in particular in the Developing World).
- b. The nature of overseas expeditions, it is generally neither appropriate nor feasible for Providers to audit transport on a centralised basis.

12.2 This document further acknowledges that the standard of transport (in particular in the Developing World) shall generally not meet UK standards.

12.3 This document therefore considers the on going Risk Assessment of transport made by the Leader in the field to be the single most important factor in determining its suitability.

12.4 The Leader shall have competence in making such assessment, and shall have received suitable prior instruction/training by the Provider.

12.5 Transport shall comply with the appropriate laws in force in the country visited (where these exist).

12.6 Transport deemed by the Provider or Leader to be unsuitable for Health and Safety reasons shall not be used by participants.

### **13 NON-TREKKING ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES**

13.1 Where the 'Technical' Duty of Care of non-trekking adventurous activities (e.g. kayaking) is the direct responsibility of the Provider (i.e. not contracted out), then the instructor of these activities shall:

- a. Be assigned prior to the expedition taking place.
- b. Have recent relevant experience in leading the activity.
- c. Hold an appropriate valid National Governing Body qualification (or valid military equivalent), or a Statement of Competence by an appropriate Technical Adviser (see 7.8).
- d. Operate at all times within the remit of the award held.

13.2 For all swimming activities there shall be an agreed Safety Management Plan.

### **14 PROVIDER'S SELECTION OF THIRD PARTIES**

14.1 Where the Provider engages the services of a third party individual or company for technical activities, (e.g. rafting companies), the Provider shall undertake checks to ensure the suitability and competency of the services offered prior to the expedition's departure from the UK. These checks shall include:

- a. Background checks.
- b. References from other users.
- c. Activity observation.

14.2 The Third Party Provider/Independent Guide shall sign a Code of Conduct for the activity they have been contracted to provide.

14.3 Prior to a Third Party Provider/Independent Guide undertaking the required task/s, the itinerary shall allow for the Leader and other staff to discuss the chosen task with the Guide.

14.4 Regardless of engagement of Guides or any Third Party Provider the Leader remains in a position of primacy and is not absolved from his/her responsibilities as outlined in Section 7. The leader shall understand that at any point he/she can stop any activity if he or she feels that the activity is jeopardising the Health and Safety of any member of the expedition.

### **DISCLAIMER**

This document does not warrant, guarantee or insure that compliance with these standards shall prevent any or all injury or loss that may be caused by or associated with any person's use of services, facilities, equipment, or other items or activities that are the subject of these standards; nor does this document assume any responsibility or liability for any such injury or loss.

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This document expressly disclaims any responsibility, liability or duty to accredited Providers, Providers' personnel and to Providers' customers and their families, or any such liability arising out of injury or loss to any person by the failure of Providers or Providers' personnel to adhere to these standards.

### **ANNEX A**

The following were used as guidance during the construction of this document:

Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits  
Outdoor Education Advisors Panel Guidance  
Local Education Authority guidelines  
School Travel Forum - Planning an Educational Visit  
School Travel Forum - Safety Management  
Young Explorer's Trust – Safe and Responsible Expeditions  
Young Explorer's Trust - Expedition Leader Development Paper  
OCR – Off-Site Safety Management Scheme  
Expedition Provider's Association Selection of Third Party Providers  
Adventure Activities Licensing Authority - Sensible health and safety when selecting and vetting adventure activity providers (Version 1: 1 September 2005)  
Kitestamp document (Clive Atkins)

### **ANNEX B**

The following individuals and organisations were consulted for opinion during the construction of this document:

Outdoor Education Advisors Panel  
Department for Education and Skills  
Independent Schools Association  
Adventure Activities Licensing Authority  
British Standards Institution  
RGS/IBG – Expedition Advisory Centre  
Young Explorer's Trust  
Institute of Outdoor Learning  
Educational Visits Advisory Council  
School Travel Forum  
English Outdoors Council  
Adventurous Activities Industries Advisory Committee  
Clive Atkins – Outdoor Education Consultant  
Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres

### **ANNEX C**

APIOL – Accredited Practitioner of the Institute of Outdoor Education  
BCU – British Canoe Union  
CRB – Criminal Records Bureau  
PoCA List – Protection of Children's Act List  
NGB – National Governing Body  
MLTUK – Mountain Leader Training United Kingdom  
BSAC – British Sub-Aqua Club  
PADI – Professional Association of Diving Instructors  
OSSM – Off-Site Safety Management