



**NZ**

**CANYONING**  
A S S O C I A T I O N

## **Safety Management Plan**

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## Introduction

The NZ Canyoning Association is the national organisation for recreational canyoning in New Zealand. It is volunteer based and is registered as an incorporated society.

The NZ Canyoning Association has a mission to protect our canyons, to raise the awareness of our canyoneers and to safely grow the sport of canyoning in New Zealand. As part of this mission and strategic objectives<sup>1</sup> the NZ Canyoning Association may from time to time organise and run canyoning events including festivals, trips, maintenance, workshops, trainings and similar such undertakings.

This safety management plan relates to volunteers running these events in a safe manner, to minimize harm to members, non-members and contractors, with reference to current canyoning practices<sup>2</sup> in New Zealand.

## Organisational structure

The NZ Canyoning Association is a volunteer based, is registered as an incorporated society, has an executive of up to 15 people and has no employed staff.

## Legislation and requirements

### Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

As defined in section 17 of the Act<sup>3</sup>, the NZ Canyoning Association is not a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU) and therefore exempt from the requirements of the act. This exemption is only valid where the association does not *employ* any person to carry out work for the association. However, the NZ Canyoning Association may *contract* individuals, companies or organizations with qualified and experienced instructors and guides to run courses or trips. They are required to be registered with Worksafe as an Adventure Activities Operator.

As defined in section 19 of the Act, any trip leaders are not 'workers' or 'volunteer workers' and therefore are exempt from any duties.

### Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulation 2016

As defined in section 4 of the regulation, a recreational association providing activities to members is exempt from having to comply with the Adventure Activities Regulation 2016<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore participants in official activities of the NZ Canyoning association should be bona-fide members of the club.

Non-members may participate in activities provided the participation is only to encourage membership of the association or interest in the association's activities, or for the purposes of a competition; and is provided to any 1 person on no more than 12 days in any 12-month period.

Although the NZ Canyoning Association is exempt from this legislation, the association recognizes that canyons have significant hazards that require experience in sound risk management in a dynamic environment. For this reason, the NZ Canyoning Association has decided to implement a safety management plan to appropriately manage the risk for its activities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nzcanyoningassociation.org>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.supportadventure.co.nz> , <http://www.kiwicanyons.org> , <https://overtheadgerescue.com>

<sup>3</sup> Meaning of PCBU. <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/latest/DLM5976849.html>

<sup>4</sup> Meaning of an Adventure Activity, Section 4, paragraph 4a.

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2016/0019/latest/DLM6725604.html>

## **Our health and safety goals**

Our aim is to keep our members, non-members and contracted instructors or guides safe. We aim to have no accidents or incidents beyond requiring first aid assistance.

## **Responsibilities**

### **All persons**

To take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.

### **Executive**

The executive will be responsible to make sure a safety management plan is operational.

### **Event Managers**

Where one is appointed, will be responsible for implementing the safety management plan for the duration of the event.

### **Leaders and Assistants**

Responsible for implementing the safety management plan during the activity they are conducting.

### **Members and non-members**

Responsible for their own safety and following the safety management plan for the activity they are conducting.

### **Contractors**

In relation to contracted instructors and guides, being aware of the NZ Canyoning Association safety management plan, and implementing their own safety management plan accordingly.

## Policies and procedures

### Outdoor Activities

#### Policy

- Each outdoor activity shall have a leader with the appropriate human and technical skills for the canyon being visited (see Appendix 1 Recommended skill sets).
- Each participant, including leaders and assistants, shall fill out and sign the activity sheet before embarking on an activity (see Appendix 2 Official NZCA Activity Sheet).
- The activity sheet is to be given to the event manager (or delegate) when one is appointed, before the activity commences. Where there is no event manager, the leader must leave the activity sheet in a safe place and provide intentions to a responsible contact person.

#### Guidelines

NZ Canyoning Association runs activities for the benefit of its members and potential members. There could be a wide variety of experience in the group conducting activities of varying difficulty.

- There may be a number of assistants to help the leader.
- A ratio of 1 leader/assistant to 6 members/participants is usually appropriate. This is dependent on the difficulty of the activity, the experience of the leaders, assistants and participants and the expected conditions during the activity.

#### Leader procedures

Depending on the type of activity, this may involve a combination of the following:

*In the week(s) prior:*

- Obtain member experience and health information.
- Choose an appropriate location for the activity.
- Recommended personal equipment lists may need to be sent to the participants depending on experience. Current NZ references include KiwiCanyons<sup>5</sup> and the Canyoning Technical Manual<sup>6</sup>.
- Obtaining sufficient up to date information about the proposed activity location, including any known hazards.
- Checking for weather, rain and river levels as appropriate.
- Considering what group equipment is appropriate for the activity, including emergency equipment.
- Obtain appropriate permission for activity location access if needed.
- Communicate with any commercial operator which also uses the proposed activity location.

*On the day:*

- Weather check.
- Leave intentions with a responsible point of contact (see Appendix 2 Activity Sheet).
- Gear check – member, group, emergency.
- Safety brief – Intro of group, canyon/activity location, roles, responsibilities, emergencies.
- Technical brief/coaching – as needed.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.kiwicanyons.org>

<sup>6</sup> <https://overtheadgerescue.com>

*In an Emergency:*

- Bring the people out of danger and undertake first aid.
- Consider sending someone out with emergency call information.
- Make a plan for other canyoningers not injured.
- Consider evacuation options – back up, down, escapes?

## **Duty of care and individual responsibilities**

### **Policy**

Event Managers accept the responsibility to:

- Ensure activity leaders equipment, fitness, health and skills are suitable for the activity.
- Compile and make available to all leaders, participants and local SAR authorities, an incident response plan appropriate to the event.
- Check that all groups have returned safely after an activity.

Activity leaders accept the responsibility to:

- Help organize activities.
- Ensure that individual participant's equipment, fitness, health and skills are suitable for the activity.
- Coordinate the group in the event of an emergency.
- Provide appropriate leadership and risk management depending on the competence of the participants, the type of activity being run (e.g. hosted canyoning, training, workshops, maintenance) and the hazards in the activity location.
- Report that the group has returned safely to the contact person.

Participants accept the responsibility to:

- Manage their own safety to the best of their ability and knowledge.
- Seek guidance from the trip leader whenever they are not certain of how to keep safe.
- Participate in group safety decision making throughout the activity.

### **Guidelines**

The trip leader should include clear information about the leaders and the individual's responsibilities for the activity at the pre-activity safety briefing.

Trip leaders should closely observe the actions of participants until the leader is satisfied that he or she understands the competence level of the participants.

## **Transport Policy**

Where a vehicle is hired or shared for member activity:

- All member drivers must have appropriate licenses for the class of vehicle they are driving.
- Vehicles must be road-worthy with the appropriate warrant or certificate of fitness.
- Drivers must follow the road rules, drive to the conditions and the situation.

### **Guidelines**

Members should drive themselves and take responsibility for their own vehicles, driving and licenses.

- Consider swapping drivers and having breaks for longer journeys.

## **Age Policy**

NZ Canyoning Association acknowledges that having young people coming into the sport is positive. This needs to be done in a safe manner. Participants under 18 need:

- Permission from parents or guardians to attend, and
- Be accompanied by a suitable person 18 years or over.

### **Guidelines**

- Minimum age for events should usually be 10 years.
- Consider putting a higher age limit on more difficult canyons.

## **Drugs and alcohol**

### **Policy**

The use of alcohol or non-prescription drugs while on a NZ Canyoning Association trip is not acceptable.

- Where the health or safety of an individual is endangered a leader may choose to remove a member from the trip.

## **Accident and incident reporting**

### **Policy**

Leaders will report all accidents, incidents and near misses that involve more than first aid assistance.

- This includes accidents and incidents involving leaders, contractors, members and non-members.
- Reporting will be to the event manager (where one exists) or to an executive member.
- The executive will:
  - Decide if there needs to be an investigation and what this process will be.
  - Consider what learning can be taken from the accident, incident or near misses that could benefit other members and improve canyoning safety.
- Any media contact will be through the spokesperson appointed by the executive.

## Hazard, risks and controls

<b>Hazard</b> Canyon environment – dark, cold, windy and wet.	
<b>Risks</b> Hypothermia Exhaustion	<b>Controls</b> Wear appropriate wetsuit gear for the canyon and take additional layers Choose shorter trips on cold days early and late season Take food and drinks for length of day out expected
<b>Hazard</b> Canyon environment – slippery and loose.	
<b>Risks</b> Slipping and tripping on wet rocks and trees Down climbing Falling objects Wasp nests Deadfall and vegetation	<b>Controls</b> Aware of slippery environment that can cause falls, sprained ankles If needed, shown how to and where to walk in a canyon environment and how to spot each other on a down climb Aware their actions may cause injury to others Leaders assess risks in canyons, find suitable routes Wear helmets
<b>Hazard</b> Jumping and sliding	
<b>Risks</b> Impacting rocks, trees or the bottom of pools Landing / entering poorly Jumping from too high	<b>Controls</b> Physical check of unknown pools Visual check of known pools Use suitable landing technique for height of jump and depth of pool Use suitable technique for sliding Suitable jump height and difficulty for ability Be conservative and don't do the jump unless you are confident it can land safely.
<b>Hazard</b> Abseiling	
<b>Risks</b> Stuck on the rope Slippery underfoot Falling off edge Losing control Stress – fear of heights Anchor/equipment failure	<b>Controls</b> If needed practice abseiling techniques A hand line/safety line used at an edge where appropriate All to wear suitable harness and helmet in good condition Suitable anchors are used. Check in-situ anchors before use Safety checks are members own responsibility Use suitable canyon rigging techniques Consider belay for inexperienced members Leader needs to consider and carry enough equipment for rescue

<b>Hazard</b> Whitewater environments	
<b>Risks</b> Traps – strainers, sieves, siphons Rising water / flash flood Aerated water Foot entrapment Deep pools Stress – fear of water	<b>Controls</b> Consider not using canyons with significant whitewater hazards Identify traps and avoid Weather check e.g. forecast, river flows, rain radar, rainfall Escape routes are known in case of rising water or flash floods Monitor the weather while in the canyon Leader needs to consider and carry enough equipment for rescue
<b>Hazard</b> Emergency events	
<b>Risks</b> Leader incapacitation Member injury High water / Rising water / flash flood	<b>Controls</b> Where possible run the canyon with at least a leader and assistant Carry a suitable means of emergency communication in the canyon Group to carry suitable first aid kit Leave intentions Brief members as needed on emergency procedures for the canyon with what to do, location of communication devices, first aid kit, how to get out of the canyon and location of vehicle keys
<b>Hazard</b> Transport	
<b>Risks</b> Driving in an unsafe manner Colliding with other objects Driving for long periods of time Faulty vehicles	<b>Controls</b> As a preference all members drive themselves and are responsible for their own vehicles, driving and licenses Where a vehicle is hired for member activity: All member drivers to have appropriate licenses for the class of vehicle they are driving Follow road rules Drive to the conditions and situation Swapping drivers and having break for longer journeys
<b>Hazard</b> Maintaining and upgrading canyons e.g. clearing debris, bolting	
<b>Risks</b> Noise, Dust, Eyes Lifting Cutting / sawing Using hand tools	<b>Controls</b> Wear protective equipment Use safe lifting techniques Use experienced operators for powered tools

## Appendix 1 Recommended skill sets

### Leader skill set

- Organising the assistants and members so everyone knows what's happening.
- Facilitate a trip that is appropriate to the needs and ability of the group compared to the challenges of the canyon for example fun, safe and learning by doing.
- Able to engage and communicate the necessary information to the group.
- Has suitable experience and is operating below their capacity for the trip.
- Would generally know the canyon and local area.
- Have the ability to apply suitable technical skills appropriate to the canyon.
- Have the ability to coordinate and undertake rescue as appropriate to canyon such as first aid, rope and water.
- Understand and follow the guidance in the Safety Management Plan.

## Appendix 2 Official NZCA Activity Sheet

The current Official NZCA Activity sheet is found on the association website<sup>7</sup>.

## Appendix 3 Incident response plan template

Incident response plans can be found on the association website<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://nzcanyoningassociation.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://nzcanyoningassociation.org/>