



National  
Guidance

## Adventure Activity Licensing Regulations

Employers, Heads/Managers, EVCs and Leaders should have a basic understanding of where and when the provision of adventurous activities is legally regulated.

Following the Lyme Bay tragedy of 1993, Parliament passed the Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act in 1995. This established the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) and made it a legal requirement for certain providers of adventure activities to be licensed by the Authority.

The scheme is now the direct responsibility of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) but is operated through the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS).

Leaders should be aware that the AALA license is an assurance of safety. It does not accredit educational or activity quality.

**Only the activities specified by the Regulations are affected by the scheme.**

"In scope" activities are:

- Caving** underground exploration in natural caves and mines including potholing, cave diving and mine exploration.
- Climbing** climbing, traversing, abseiling and scrambling activities except on purpose-designed climbing walls or abseiling towers.
- Trekking** walking, pony trekking, mountain biking, off-piste skiing, or similar, in remote open country. Travelling in any place which is *moorland* (open uncultivated land at any height above sea level) or on a mountain above 600m and from which it would take more than 30 minutes *travelling time*, using the standard Naismith's Rule, to walk back to an *accessible road* or *refuge*
- Watersports** canoeing, rafting, sailing and related activities when done on the sea, tidal waters, any body of inland water in which it is possible to be more than 50 m from the nearest perimeter bank, and any inland waters where the surface is turbulent because of weirs, rapids, waterfalls or fast-flowing currents (white water). Licensing does not cover rowing activities, surfing, powered craft, towed inflatable craft or large sailing vessels.

The scheme applies to those providers who sell in-scope adventure activities. Unless specifically exempted, anyone who provides facilities for 'in scope'

adventure activities to young people under the age of 18 in return for payment must have a licence and abide by its conditions.

**The following are specifically exempt from the need to hold a licence:**

- Educational establishments providing activities for their own pupils/students (but not if they provide for pupils/students on another establishment's roll). This exemption does NOT include outdoor education centres, field study centres or other provision run by Local Authorities (for example DofE award scheme), who, therefore, do need a licence.
- Voluntary Associations providing activities for their own members, or for members of another voluntary association pursuant to an agreement between them. Voluntary Associations can also hold open days for non-members without holding a licence, provided no individual non-member participates for more than 3 days
- Crown servants (e.g. Ministry of Defence employees) providing facilities for adventure activities in the course of their duties.
- Provision to under-18s who are accompanied by their parents or legally appointed guardians.

## Other Schemes

There are some high profile outdoor and adventurous activities that do not fall within the remit of AALA licensing; e.g. rock climbing on purpose made climbing walls, surfing, high poles and ropes courses.

Providers of these activities may have obtained other forms of non-statutory accreditation such as Adventuremark but this is not a legal requirement.

## Further information

The definitive source of advice on the Licensing Regulations is to be found in the Health and Safety Executive publication L77: **"Guidance from the Licensing Authority on Adventure Activity Licensing Regulations 2004"**. This, along with further information and a list of licence holders can be obtained from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/>

Where leaders require further guidance on licensing, they should seek advice from the Adviser appointed by their employer.

