



National  
Guidance

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## Off Site Visit Emergencies: Guidance for Leaders

*This should be read in conjunction with other documents relating to emergencies and Critical Incidents in this guidance.*

Many incidents will happen on off site visits and be dealt with by the visit leaders. However, some of these incidents may become Emergencies and require support from the Establishment and/or the Employer.

### Definition of an Emergency

- 1) An incident where a group member:
  - has suffered a life threatening injury or fatality;
  - is at serious risk; or
  - has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.
- 2) Any incident that is beyond the normal coping mechanisms of the Visit Leadership Team.

### Overview

Visit Leaders must follow their Establishment's Emergency Procedures. Such procedures are an essential part of all visit planning.

Whilst taking reasonable care of themselves and others, leaders should not hesitate to take life saving action in an extreme situation.

The Visit Leader should take charge of an incident until relieved by the emergency services or by a senior member of Employer/Establishment staff. **In the event that the Visit Leader is incapacitated, all members of the Visit Leadership Team should have the competence to take charge and to initiate the Establishment Emergency Plan.**

By their nature, Emergencies are usually unexpected and can therefore be stressful. However, training and careful pre-planning of what to do beforehand can mitigate the trauma of being caught up in one. The following points are intended to assist with planning for and dealing with a visit Emergency.

## Before the visit

- Follow any specific guidance provided by your Employer and Establishment.
- Agree Emergency Procedures, which include 24-hour (i.e. constant cover) contacts at the Establishment/Employer and clear roles for the Visit Leaders, Establishment/Employer Emergency Contact, Head teacher etc. *See the various emergency action cards in this guidance.*
- Communications can become swamped in an emergency, particularly if parents/media are trying to call for news. Phone numbers, not in the public domain, should be agreed between visit leaders and their establishment/employer contact to maintain communications in the event that primary channels become overwhelmed. Parents should not be given the telephone numbers that activate the Establishment's Emergency Plan or the Employer's Critical Incident Plan.
- Train all members of the Visit Leadership Team in how to respond to an emergency. Practical practice and training can help them to switch into emergency mode when needed.
- The role of Emergency Contact back at base can be very demanding when an emergency does occur, and it is important to ensure that the people who have that role are competent. Ensuring competence means choosing the right person and could involve any of the following: having opportunities to think through scenarios and how to react to them; crib cards; training; access to support.
- Always include discussion of Emergency Procedures in any planning meeting and as part of your risk management process.
- Allocate roles. An effective Emergency response requires several things to happen at once and the Visit Leader cannot attend to casualties, ensure that others in the group are moved to a safe place and kept safe, call for help from the emergency services, instigate the Emergency Procedures and keep notes of the incident all at the same time.
- Involve young people in planning for incidents and Emergencies – unless there are particular reasons why this would be inappropriate.
- All members of the Visit Leadership Team should have easy access to a copy of the Emergency Procedures throughout the visit, and know what action to take if there is a problem. Consider laminating the Procedures onto cards.
- Where there will be significant periods of remote supervision, young people will also need an appropriate version of the Emergency Procedures. They will also need to be appropriately trained in how to apply them.
- Ensure that there is an appropriate level of first aid and lifesaving cover as necessary for the nature of the visit/activities. Basic first aid is not at all complicated and many lives could be saved each year if more people knew how to open an airway, place a casualty into a safe airway position and deal with major bleeding/shock. Good practical first aid training is an excellent way to provide young people with a useful life skill while enhancing their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is also an excellent team building/group work activity. It would, therefore, be good practice for establishments to provide some form of first aid training to all students/young people and staff (whether certificated or not).
- Ensure that the first aid kits are appropriately stocked and accessible.

- Ensure that all individual medical needs are known and that leaders are competent to handle them.
- Practice emergency drills e.g. evacuation of mini-bus, rapid group collection/head count, fire drills at any accommodation.

There is specific Government advice for preparation if you are visiting a place where there is a risk of a terrorist attack. Point 2 of the advice in the link below raises awareness of exit options where it is possible to move a group away from a terrorist incident or, if not possible, to try to seek a place to hide.

<http://tinyurl.com/pp4fxmu>

## During the Incident

**During an Emergency you will not have time to read this guidance – you will be reliant on training and effective/practised systems. ALL Emergency Procedures should be regularly tested and all members of a Visit Leadership Team should feel able to deal with an incident, including alerting the Establishment in the event of an Emergency. The use of laminated crib cards may be helpful.**

### Immediate action

1. Assess the situation, establishing the nature and extent of the problem but ensuring that the leaders do not put themselves self at further risk.
2. Make sure all other members of the party are:
  - accounted for
  - safe
  - adequately supervised
  - briefed to ensure that they understand what to do to remain safe.
3. Leaders should assume their allocated roles - ensuring that where one or more of the Visit Leadership Team is incapacitated then these roles are reassigned on a priority basis.
4. If there are injuries, take action to establish their extent and administer appropriate first aid.

### First Aid

Aim to:

- Preserve life.
- Prevent the condition worsening.
- Promote recovery - Treat for shock – Reassure and keep warm.

## Communications

Direct contact with a Parent of a group member, from the scene of the incident should be avoided. This task should be carried out from the Establishment home base by senior staff.

1. Contact the appropriate emergency service(s). They will guide you through the information they need but this will include:
  - Your name and the name of the Group
  - location
  - nature of emergency and number of injured persons
  - action so far
2. Alert the Establishment/Employer's Emergency Contact. You may be in shock and need support. Also news travels fast and your Establishment/Employer will need accurate information.
3. Consider other people who may need contacting:
  - Police
  - Embassy/Consulate if abroad
  - Local accommodation/contact
  - Tour operator/provider
  - Insurer
4. DO NOT speak to the media. Refer all media interest/enquiries to the Establishment/Employer.
5. Control any communications by the rest of the group. Rumours spread very quickly and can cause serious and unnecessary upset.

## Secondary action

1. Arrange appropriate protection from the elements.
2. Uninjured group members should be moved to shelter or away from the immediate vicinity of any casualties. Ensure that they:
  - are adequately supervised throughout
  - are returned as early as possible to base
  - receive appropriate support and reassurance.
3. Avoid splitting the group – unless it is the only way to get help – and leave nobody on their own.
4. Manage the incident - ensure that all appropriate actions have been/are being attended to.
5. It is useful to keep an accurate record of events and actions as close to real time as possible. Any leader with spare capacity should, therefore, keep notes – see the section below on recording an incident.
6. Ensure that an appropriate adult accompanies any casualties to hospital, taking with them parental consent forms and appropriate medical information for the injured persons.
7. Maintain contact with the emergency services and the Establishment/Employer contact until the Emergency is over.

8. Monitor, reassess and review – ensure nothing has been forgotten and all leaders and young people are coping, cared for and secure.

### Post-Incident action

1. Consider the emotional needs of any leaders or young people who may have been adversely affected.
2. Follow your Employer's and Establishment's reporting requirements, including completing any accident and incident forms and complying with RIDDOR regulations.
3. Review the lessons learned and ensure that these feed into future visit plans, emergency plans and staff training.
4. Share the experience and learning with colleagues.

### Media/legal points

- Do not admit anything.
- Do not sign anything.
- Avoid discussing legal liability with others.
- Do not talk to the press – refer them to your employer's media contact.
- Record all events, times and details – establish witness contact details and get statements from leaders.

### Recording an incident:

Make an accurate record of all details as soon as possible – do not leave this until later when your memory of details may be confused.

Record the following:

- time, date and nature of the incident.
- accurate incident location.
- names of casualties.
- details of injuries.
- actions taken, including all communications.
- names of others involved but not injured.
- details of any moves from the incident site (times, who moved, where to, how).
- names and contact details of witnesses.
- proposed actions.

