

SERIOUS INCIDENT (ACCIDENT) REVIEW PROCESS

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I. Preparation and Understanding

There are some givens that need to be understood before looking at what happens when a serious incident occurs in your program.

- a. Following a major incident, external reviews are a common practice in all industries.
- b. All programs should have a Risk Management Committee, and each member should clearly understand the Emergency Action Plan and External Review process.
- c. There should be a clear understanding and agreement among program administration, trustees, insurance carrier, and counsel regarding the post incident review process. (Issues may include unwillingness of insurance carrier to include outside reviewers, levels of disclosure to family, other outside interests, etc.)

II. When to Consider Having an External Review of an Incident

- a. When a fatality occurs to a participant
- b. When a fatality occurs to a staff member while on duty
- c. When a permanently disabling injury occurs to a participant
- d. Possibly when a permanently disabling injury occurs to staff member while on duty
- e. Possibly when a life threatening injury occurs to a participant or staff member (while on duty)

III. What is the Role of the External Review Team

- a. *Overall Mission:* To help the industry prevent fatalities and permanently disabling injuries.
- b. *Specific Mission:* To help the program find and/or confirm the primary and secondary causes of the incident.
- c. *Goal:* To provide recommendations and suggestions that focus on prevention of further incidents and improvement of quality; i.e., to serve as a consultant.
- d. *Hazard:* Members of the team may be asked to become expert witnesses—by either side!

IV. Who should Be On the External Review Team

- a. *Personality:* empathetic, open minded, reflective, proven communication skills (verbal and written),

able to maintain objectivity and confidentiality. Conversely, do not select persons who may have a conflict of interest, who are known to have biases, and who may already have formed an opinion.

b. Skills:

- The Team Leader should have, in addition to the above, credibility in the field, including several seasons of direct instruction and at least three years of administrative experience.
- At least one member should have unquestionable expertise in the activity and type of terrain in which the incident occurred.
- Other factors will determine what other kinds of skill sets are needed. Examples: appoint a doctor if a medical condition (illness, hypothermia, dehydration, HAPE, etc.) was part of the cause; appoint a school administrator if the incident occurred on a school outing; appoint a counselor/psychologist if participants were from a special population.

V. Ground Rules for the External Review Team

- a. Assure program that findings will be confidential unless otherwise agreed.
- b. Secure understanding from program that findings will be independent.
- c. Get agreement from program that all records and people will be available to the Review Team.
- d. Get agreement from the program that all recommendations will be followed.
- e. Assure that support will be provided as needed.
- f. Discuss and agree on how media will be handled, including control of the Final Report. No matter what, no talking with media before the end of the process. Be explicit about book, article, movie, TV requests.
- g. Agree in writing as to fees and costs.
- h. If a conflict arises among team members, it will be resolved in private, with the Team Leader having the ultimate authority.

VI. Steps in Conducting an External Review

- a. The program should begin appointing the review team immediately following the incident. There should be a Team Leader and from two to five

other members, depending on the magnitude and kind of incident.

- b. Draw up a written agreement as to scope of work, process, costs, and distribution of Final Report. (See Ground Rules for External Review Team.)
- c. External Review Team Steps:
 - Team Leader communicates with other members as to timing, process, task assignments.
 - When environmental factors are part of the cause, deploy at least one review team member to the site ASAP (before conditions change). Photographs, and perhaps video, of the scene should be a part of this process.
 - Review all pertinent written materials.
 - Conduct site visits, including headquarters

and where incident occurred.

- Interviews with appropriate administration, staff, and external people and agencies involved.
- Each team member writes findings and gives to Team Leader.
- Team Leader writes DRAFT for the program's Risk Management/Internal Review Team.
- Team Leader meets with program's team to discuss DRAFT and possible revisions.
- Team Leader submits Final Report to designated program person(s).
- Team Leader available for meetings with various levels of program to discuss Final Report.
- Team Leader and team members shred all notes and drafts so that only the Final Report document is available.

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BOUND**

