



Water environments are one of the most hazardous where risk of harm is ever present. Whenever someone intends to participate in water-based activity, safety planning is important so that everyone involved is kept safe.

Depending on the circumstances, safety planning can be informal or formal. What keeps people safe is the process of critical thinking and critical action based on some key questions (see below). Prior to the activity this process can be as simple as a conversation between friends or more complex in completing a recognised risk assessment template. The process continues throughout the activity by actively monitoring, responding and communicating the strategies you have put in place to control the risk.

This teacher guide should be used in conjunction with the Recreation Aotearoa (formerly NZRA) and Education Outdoors New Zealand (EONZ) resources:

- a) [Overarching Risk Management Guidance Document](#) to help explain the risk assessment process
- b) [Good Practice Guidelines](#) for general guidance on what to consider when planning an outdoor activity
- c) Specific water activity guidelines [Inland waterway swimming](#) and [Flatwater floating and paddling](#) and their corresponding planning templates [Inland swimming template](#) and [Flatwater paddling template](#) to provide a specific activity plan upon which to base your detailed planning

## Key questions to consider

Risk management theory for the outdoors has long been based on 5 key questions:

1. Why are we doing this activity? (What are the **potential gains**/benefits?)
2. What could go wrong? (How might we be **harmed**?)
3. What could cause things to go wrong? (What are the **hazards**?)
4. What can we do to prevent things going wrong? (What strategies will we put in place to **control** the risk of the hazard leading to harm?)
5. What will we do if things still go wrong? (What is our **emergency response**?)

In recent years prioritising risks that have the greatest potential for harm has become standard good practice to reflect legislation (Health and Safety at Work Act 2015). Now the risk assessment process includes a rating of risk for each identified hazard. We now insert two questions:

3 (a) What is the **likelihood** that the hazard will cause harm and what may be the **severity** of that harm? (**Risk rating**)

4(a) Now that all our controls are in place what is the risk rating now? (Residual Risk). Is the **residual risk** acceptable to continue?

## Making decisions – what level of risk is acceptable?

Making decisions on whether to proceed with participating in a water activity should be based on the level of residual risk deemed acceptable. It is recommended residual risk ratings of 'low' and 'medium' are acceptable and 'high' only rarely and only for good reason. 'Extreme' risk ratings are unacceptable. Risk rating also helps keep any 'high' or 'medium' risks **prioritised** in every participant's mind.

## Exploring the Process – A Group Planning Exercise

The following Group Planning Exercise helps develop the safety planning process by utilising a large template that considers all the key questions above. It can be difficult to think of everything so "[a] team approach is best to achieve a shared understanding and consensus" (EONZ and NZRA 2019). Hence the following activity has 3-4 people sharing their ideas.

This planning activity is **best suited to secondary school students** and **teachers** but simpler versions can be very effective in younger students e.g. starting with only the first 5 key questions above, keeping language simple and then discussing which things are 'most dangerous' and asking a question like "Who do we need to help us be safe?"

## Risk Assessment and Supervision – A Group Planning Exercise

Planning for safety in any risky activity involves a comprehensive process that can take some time to master. This planning exercise is designed to

- facilitate the thinking process in a less formal and engaging way
- be used in small groups (3-4 people) to encourage contribution and collaboration of ideas
- be a pre-cursor to students completing a more formal Risk Assessment and Supervision plan (RAS) (See [Inland Waterway Swimming Template](#) for an example)

It is recommended to refer to [Managing Risk Guidance](#) to help understand the process, in particular risk rating.

## Instructions

1. Either print out the template below in A3 size (or have students reconstruct on large sheets of butcher's paper with a marker pen), one sheet per group
2. Organise the class into small groups (of 3 is best). Teacher facilitates the process.

## Part 1 – Risk assessment

3. For a chosen activity begin by completing the **top row** and the **first column**. (What are we doing and why are we doing it when it puts people at risk?) Discuss

4. "Pass it On". The next steps are to complete some of the columns in a fun way that increases sharing of ideas. You will need a stopwatch. Students **brainstorm their ideas in a limited time**. (It is the thinking process that is important, so they shouldn't expect to think of everything – the short timeframe is deliberate).

- Column (Harm). Brainstorm – e.g. drowning, injuries, , getting separated (**2 minutes**)
- Teacher calls "Time" and "Pass it On" (Each sheet of paper is passed to the next group e.g. clockwise, so that each group has someone else's sheet)
- Column (Hazards). Read what the previous group has written. Brainstorm what things may cause the harm – e.g. rocks in the water, swimmer out of depth, fatigue (**3 minutes**)
- Teacher calls "Time" and "Pass it On" (as in b) above)
- Column (Controls). Brainstorm the things that could be done to stop the hazards causing the harm. E.g. all swimmers wear a life jacket properly (**3 minutes**)
- Teacher calls "Time" and "Pass it Back". Each group finds and returns sheets to the original owner.
- Read what others have written. Now go to the bottom right row. Choose ONE of the "harms". Write down what would be done to respond if this happened. (**3 minutes**)
- Having shared ideas with some groups, teacher facilitates a discussion on commonalities, interesting ideas etc.
- Risk Rating. Risk is the chance of harm being caused by a hazard. Complete Column (Risk Rating). How likely is it that the harm will occur and how bad might the harm (consequence) be IF NONE OF THE CONTROLS WERE IN PLACE? E.g. drowning, out of depth – HIGH
- Column (Residual Risk Rating). Do the same once controls are in place e.g. drowning, out of depth, wearing a life jacket – LOW
- Risk rating helps us focus on the highest risks. Any risks that have a residual risk of HIGH or MEDIUM are at the forefront of everyone's attention throughout the activity. (NB. Accepting any residual risk that is HIGH and going ahead with the activity needs to be considered very carefully. Usually you would not proceed)

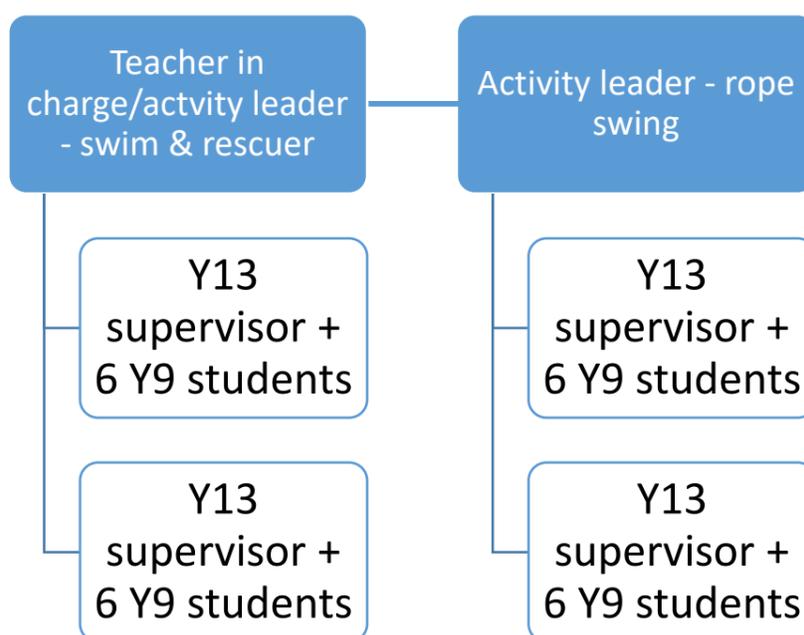
## Part 2 – Supervision (This part can be useful if the activity has multiple leaders and supervisors)

Having sufficient and capable leaders and supervisors is critical when learning in a risky environment. They should all have clear roles and responsibilities and be allocated in an effective structure. E.g. there may be one person designated as 'rescuer', there may be 3 people each allocated 4 students to watch at all times

5. On page two of the template. Brainstorm the things a leader of this activity would need to know and be able to do. Then brainstorm for a supervisor. (You could swap with another group, tick those that are the same and add any more. Hand back and discuss)

6. Identify the specific roles of leaders and supervisors and their responsibilities. E.g. Rescuer. Skilled in bystander and water rescues. Oversees all swimmers and responds to anyone needing help

7. Describe or draw a diagram of what the supervision structure looks like. Show how students are allocated to leaders and supervisors and how supervisors and leaders are allocated to each other and a person in charge. E.g. waterhole swimming with a rope swing. 24 Y9 students in two groups; two teachers (activity leaders); four Y13 student supervisors each allocated six students. Students are buddied up.



# Risk Assessment and Supervision – A Group Planning Exercise



ACTIVITY:		WHERE:	WHEN:	WHO'S INVOLVED (including nos.):	
WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?	WHAT COULD GO WRONG? [ Harm ]	WHAT COULD CAUSE THIS TO HAPPEN? [ Hazard ]	Risk Rating? (L,M,H, Extreme)	WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING? [ Control ]	Residual Risk Rating? (L,M,H, Extreme)
<p><b>IF IT STILL GOES WRONG THIS IS WHAT WE'LL DO...[ Emergency Response ]</b></p>					

Core Competencies	Roles & Responsibilities	Supervision Structure (Bring through "Who's involved?" from page 1)
Core Competencies for Activity Leaders:	e.g. Teacher in charge, non-participant supervisor...	How is the leadership and supervision team allocated to participants? (It can be useful to draw a diagram)
Core Competencies for Supervisors:		