



# **SAFETY MANAGEMENT**

## **SYSTEM**

### **PRE-TOUR SAFETY GUIDE**



**THE EQUITY COMMITMENT TO SAFETY**

Equity is committed to ensuring that all clients benefit from the highest possible safety standards throughout their tour.

## **THE EQUITY PRE-TOUR SAFETY GUIDE**

The safety of our clients whilst on tour is of paramount importance to Equity. We have set out the comprehensive checks and procedures we follow in our Safety Management System (SMS). An outline of this SMS appears in our brochure. More detailed information is available on request.

The most effective way to ensure a safe and trouble free tour is to prepare thoroughly. Our pre-tour safety guide provides useful information that we believe will assist in the planning and preparation of your tour.

### **BETTER TO PLAN AND NOT NEED IT THAN NOT TO PLAN AND NEED IT**

We would also draw your attention to ‘Party Leaders Important Notes’, which will have been received with the final numbers forms. A copy of this document is also sent with your final numbers.

We wish you a safe and enjoyable tour with Equity.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
The Equity Commitment to Safety	2
The Equity Pre-Tour Safety Guide	2
Planning your Tour	3
Inspection Visits	4
Coach Transport	5
Ferry Transport	6
Eurotunnel Transport	6-7
Airlines	7
Accommodation	7-8
General Safety in Accommodation	8-9
Emergency Contacts	9-11
Health Advice for Travellers	11-12
Other Useful Information	12-13

# 1. PLANNING YOUR TOUR

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## 1.1 Supervisory Staff Free Place Ratio

Equity offers 1 free supervisory staff place per 8 students on coach tours and a 1 free supervisory staff place per 10 students on air tours.

This ratio is greater than required by the most stringent LEA policy and we recommend that it be adhered to ensure optimum support and cover.

If non-teaching parents are invited to make up the supervisory staff numbers, it is vital to check the implications with your governing body and LEA. All adult leaders must accept responsibility for the well-being of students including matters relating to safety and discipline.

## 1.2 Previous Experience

The experience and awareness of accompanying staff can contribute greatly towards the avoidance of many incidents whilst on tour. We recommend that at least one of the supervisory staff members accompanying a residential tour has had previous experience of school travel. Their first hand knowledge will be invaluable.

It is also recommended that one of the adults with the group should be able to speak and read the language of the visited country.

## 1.3 Pre-Tour Meetings

It is important to meet regularly with staff accompanying the tour to establish policy and to communicate this policy to the students participating on the tour. Parents may also wish to be involved, and one evening meeting for leaders, students and parents will provide an opportunity to reinforce guidelines, answer questions and perhaps run through the tour itinerary.

Aspects of safety and behaviour should certainly be raised at such meetings and students should be advised of their individual responsibility for collective safety.

## 1.4 Codes of Conduct

Groups may want to consider creating a code of conduct. The code should consider behaviour during free time, which is when accidents are more likely.

## 1.5 Documentation

Accurate and comprehensive documentation is vital. We recommend that a complete set of tour documents is left with your designated school contact. This will facilitate speedy assistance in the event of an incident. Any last minute changes should be communicated to your school contact.

## 2. INSPECTION VISITS

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An inspection visit to your selected destination offers an ideal opportunity to familiarise yourself with the accommodation and surrounding area prior to your tour.

Equity provides two kinds of inspection visits:

### 2.1 Group Inspection Visits Accompanied by Equity Staff

These are organised by Equity annually to a variety of destinations. Visits will include the accommodation we use, sample excursions and also an opportunity to discuss any aspects of your tour with Equity staff and local agents.

These visits are publicised with our mailed literature.

### 2.2 Individual Inspection Visits

For tour destinations not covered by group inspection visits, Equity offers group leaders an opportunity to visit their selected destination and Equity will pay for 1 nights bed and breakfast accommodation for two people in a twin room.

### 2.3 During Individual Inspection Visits

- Familiarise yourself with the layout of the accommodation and the town.
- Select an appropriate central meeting point for your group.
- Make a note of any ‘out of bounds’ areas.
- Note down useful telephone numbers such as emergency services, etc.
- Visit the nearest tourist office – seek out any areas/sites/places where extra safety precautions maybe necessary.
- Complete Risk Assessment on accommodation
- Complete Risk Assessment on visits/sites that you intend being part of your itinerary.

### 2.4 Risk Assessments

Carrying out risk assessments for excursions will help with identifying risks and establishing measures to counteract them. A helpful way to look at this is considering it a group management plan. The goal is to be prepared to guide the group to any obstacles that may arise.

If you are unsure of the process of creating a risk assessment, a full explanation is available in “Demystifying Risk Assessments” which can be downloaded from [www.schooltravelforum.com/DemystifyingRiskAssessment](http://www.schooltravelforum.com/DemystifyingRiskAssessment)

### 2.5 If you are unable to undertake an Inspection Visit

Should you have any particular questions on safety issues, consult our office staff who will be pleased to assist.

- Equity will be pleased to provide you with a copy of our Safety Management System document.
- Equity will be pleased to provide accommodation audit information in accordance with our Safety Management System.
- Equity are building a library of Risk Assessments of excursion visits. These can be provided, subject to availability, at a supplementary charge.

## 3 TRANSPORT

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### 3.1 COACH TRANSPORT

We have established a core of British Selected Coach Operators. These selected operators are all well established reliable companies, most of whom we have worked with for many years.

### 3.2 Seatbelts

All British coaches we use have seatbelts fitted and these should be worn at all times. **This is a legal requirement in many countries including France.** Spot fines can be made and accompanying adults will be held responsible.

### 3.3 Safety Induction Talk

Equity has also arranged for a short induction talk to be given by the driver before departure, similar to the one given on an aircraft or ship. Please request the coach safety briefing from the driver if this is not automatically provided.

#### Points to remember

- Emergency Exits  
Staff should be seated strategically near all exits. This is a legal requirement in some countries including France. Spot fines can be made. Check the emergency exits are operational if possible.
- First Aid Kit  
Check the location.
- Fire Extinguishers  
Check the location and operational instructions.
- Seatbelts  
Make sure all passengers use these.  
(See note 3.2)
- Luggage  
Keep all luggage clear of aisles and exits.
- Rubbish  
Provide collection facilities (plastic Carrier bags are ideal). Do not allow these to obstruct the aisles and exits.
- Standing in the Aisle  
Is not permitted while the vehicle is moving. Group members should remain seated with seat belts on.
- Do not disturb driver  
whilst he/she is driving. Staff should be strategically seated to ensure good behaviour throughout the vehicle including the rear and upstairs in the case of a double decker coach.
- Getting off the vehicle  
Take care especially on the Continent. The door may open directly onto the road and the traffic will be approaching from an unfamiliar direction.

## 4. FERRY TRANSPORT

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### 4.1 Boarding the Ferry

On boarding the ferry identify yourself and your group to the Reception at the Information Desk. Hand in the completed form given below.

Advise the reception where your party will be situated and ensure responsible adult members remain at this point of contact throughout the crossing.

Locating a specific area should facilitate supervision of your group.

Encourage students to remain in the assigned area and to advise you whenever they leave the area.

### 4.2 Emergency Procedures on Board the Ferry

Ensure that all members of the group are familiar with the emergency procedure. We have included a sample of P&O Ferries safety announcement. Go through the procedure and nautical terminology with the group before departure. Concentration on boarding the ship may be low and spirits high after a long coach journey to the port.

In an emergency, go to the nearest Muster Station (assembly point) and follow the ferry operator's instructions. Do not try to return to the group base.

### 4.3 Behaviour of Young Persons on Board Ship Hazard Information Sheet

Please see the information sheet produced by P&O Ferries attached to this document.

## 5. EUROTUNNEL

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### 5.1 Emergency Procedures on Board the Eurotunnel Shuttle

The coach is assigned a space on board the train and all passengers should remain on the coach.

This, again, should facilitate the supervision of your group.

Ensure that all members of the group listen fully to the emergency announcements and recap yourself to ensure they have been comprehensively understood.

### 5.2 Passenger Safety Instructions

Remind your passengers:

- Smoking is strictly forbidden on board. (this can activate the fire suppression system).
- Do not use flash photography (light intensity could trigger the optical fire detection systems in the carriages. (this would activate emergency procedures and could lead to evacuation of the shuttle).
- Do not stand between vehicles, or between vehicles and the doors at either ends of the carriage during the crossing (even if the shuttle were just to slow down, vehicles might move and if you happened to be between two vehicles at that time you could be very seriously injured. The consequences if the shuttle were to brake suddenly could be disastrous).

- Follow instructions given on the broadcast system and Eurotunnel radio as well as those shown on the visual display screens in your carriage or given by the staff on board.
- Note the number of your carriage given on the visual display screens.
- On arrival at the terminal, return to your coach.

### **5.3 In the event of an Emergency**

- An alarm will sound.
- Evacuate all passengers from the coach.
- Follow instructions of staff on board and arrows directing your passengers either
  - a) → Towards the neighbouring carriages
  - b) → Towards the service tunnel in order to board another shuttle

## **6. AIRLINES**

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As outlined in the Equity Safety Management System (SMS), all airlines fully comply with independently set safety standards which are of a very high standard.

However, whilst at the airport for both departure and arrival procedures, it is advisable to assign pupils to smaller groups.

It is also advisable to have meeting points and times to avoid party members getting lost.

Ensure all party members keep their bags with them at all times and pay attention to all announcements regardless of whether or not they are directly related to their flight both on and off board the aircraft. To ensure that the party is not held up and subsequently separated through customs, it is strongly recommended not to have any sharp objects such as scissors, knives etc in hand luggage. Please see Equity Party Leaders notes for further information.

### **AIR TRANSPORT**

Make sure students listen carefully to the on board Safety Talk.

## **7. ACCOMMODATION**

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It is highly recognised that standards and regulations on fire and safety differ greatly throughout Europe.

Our inspection criteria for hotels is defined in our Safety Management System (which can be downloaded from this website).

### **7.1 Induction Talk**

Equity request an induction talk (and where practical, a fire drill) to be given to our groups on arrival at your accommodation. Be sure to ask for an induction or at least advice upon your arrival.

## 7.2 Procedures in Case of Fire

Please familiarise yourself and your group with the procedure in case of fire. We have enclosed a copy of our fire safety leaflet which is supplied to all groups to serve as a guide.

- Read the fire procedure displayed in the accommodation or ask for a copy if it is not displayed.
- Check the means of calling the fire brigade.
- Check the fire escape routes making sure they are not blocked.
- Check if fire call points are present and how to sound the fire alarm.
- Check all rooms before lights out.
- Unplug any electrical appliances.
- **A STRICT NO-SMOKING RULE APPLIES IN BEDROOMS**
- Check the location of the assembly point.

### IN CASE OF FIRE

1. REMAIN CALM
2. DO NOT USE LIFTS
3. FOLLOW EXIT SIGNS IF POSSIBLE AND LEAVE THE BUILDING AS SPEEDILY AS POSSIBLE
4. AIR MAY BE CLEARER NEAR THE FLOOR – CRAWL IF NEED BE
5. GO TO THE ASSEMBLY POINT AND AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS
6. DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY THE FIRE BRIGADE

## 8. GENERAL SAFETY IN ACCOMMODATION

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### 8.1 Reception Times and Cover

Check the times of reception and night porter duties if available. You never know when you may need to contact someone for assistance or important information.

### 8.2 Smoking

If your students are allowed to smoke, please advise them that **SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE BEDROOMS**, only in a designated area.

### 8.3 Lift Safety

Some groups stipulate that lifts are out of bounds for students. Students should never use a lift unaccompanied.

We advise against the use of 3 sided lifts. These do still exist in older hotels and can be dangerous, jamming fingers, etc.

### 8.4 Balconies/Banisters

Make sure that banisters and rails are soundly constructed and sturdy. Tell the manager if they are not and ask for this to be rectified. Make a note and let Equity know too.

### **8.5 Emergency Exits**

A thorough familiarisation of all exits is strongly recommended. Group Leaders should walk the escape route. Fire exits should be assigned to groups to avoid dangerous stampedes through one or more exit.

### **8.6 Glass Panes (Clear)**

Be aware of clear glass doors or patio doors which are difficult to see. It is easy to walk into these, risking injury.

### **8.7 Floors**

Many hotels have polished composite stone floors. Such floors can be slippery, especially when wet.

### **8.8 Electrical Sockets in bathrooms**

Some hotels may still have electric sockets in the bathrooms. Equity strongly recommends that you advise students not to use these.

### **8.9 Supervision at Swimming Pools**

Check the guidelines issued by your LEA or Governing Body. Many European pools do not provide lifeguards. We advise you not to allow your students to swim without competent, qualified, lifesaver supervision. Check the depth of the pool and that there are no hidden obstructions or sudden changes in depth or contours. The water should be clear and the bottom visible and the depth of the water clearly marked around the edges.

## **9. EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

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In the event of a serious incident whilst on tour, your first point of contact will be the local emergency services. Please ensure you are aware of their contact details. Equity can provide you with this information. However, it is essential to communicate speedily with contacts that have been involved with your tour arrangements. These include:

- Your nominated school emergency contact
- Equity (contact number appear on the front sheet of the itinerary this includes a 24 hour emergency contact number)
- The emergency medical service (in the event of a medical emergency) provided by our Insurance Company. The number appears on the front sheet of the itinerary.

### **9.1 Nominated School Emergency Contact**

It is essential to select a school contact who will be contactable at all times whilst you are on tour, especially on travelling days when you are most likely to need to make contact (e.g. due to a travel delay). This contact must be able to contact all parents, perhaps via a pyramid telephone communication system.

## **9.2 Equity 24 hour Emergency Contact**

Equity provide party leaders with a 24 hour emergency contact number to be used when groups are on tour, which is stated in our information sheet “Party Leaders Important Notes” and appears on the cover sheet of each itinerary. The number reaches an operator who will contact our duty officer by radio pager. A Senior Manager or Director is also available by radio pager to assist the duty officer on a 24-hour basis.

There is a procedure in place in the event of a major incident.

### **EQUITY DURING NORMAL OFFICE HOURS**

01273 648 248

### **OUT OF HOURS YOU WILL HAVE THE EQUITY EMERGENCY NUMBER ON THE FRONT SHEET OF THE ITINERARY**

If you have an out of hours emergency call leave a message with the Equity Emergency Service for the Equity Duty Officer who will contact you promptly.

The message should include:

- Caller’s name and school name
- Contact telephone number
- Location
- Brief reason for the call

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THIS EMERGENCY NUMBER BE RELEASED TO PARENTS OR STUDENTS OR OUR PROCEDURES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY**

## **9.3 Emergency Medical Assistance**

In the event of serious illness or injury, you may need the help of the emergency medical service. This service is included in your Equity insurance cover and a 24-hour number printed on the front sheet of your itinerary.

### **The following information will usually be required:**

1. Name and contact number of the group leader
2. Full name and age of patient(s)
3. UK address
4. Number of people in the group
5. Travel dates
6. Tour booking reference
7. Name and telephone number of the patient’s GP in UK (if known).
8. Name and telephone number of hospital/medical centre.
9. Ward/room and name of local treating doctor
10. Date of admission
11. Details of illness/injury
12. Name of anyone requesting to stay/travel with the patient.

**Following your call, the Medical Assistance Company will undertake the following:**

1. Contact treating doctor/medical centre for details of illness/injury.
2. Guarantee hospital/medical costs where necessary.
3. Establish the necessity for repatriation. This will be on the recommendation of the treating doctor, **not** the patient or their family.
4. Arrange repatriation as specified by the doctor. The Medical Assistance Company will arrange ambulances/flights/nurses etc., as necessary.
5. Where repatriation has been organised, the group leader will be contacted by The Medical Assistance Company for him/her to pass any relevant details on to the rest of the group. Occasionally, the ambulance company may contact the group leader for directions or the location of the hospital or accommodation.
6. In the event of a death, the Medical Assistance Company will require the details of the next of kin; where the deceased is; cause of death; contact number for relatives.

NB The Medical Assistance Company will permit a relative to travel out to an ill or injured person where this is deemed to be medically necessary. It is essential to obtain the Medical Assistance Company's agreement prior to travel.

## **10. HEALTH ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS**

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### **10.1 Medical Recommendations**

Illness is something that we all dread and it can be especially disconcerting to suffer illness abroad, as medical treatment generally has to be paid for. All Equity groups are automatically covered by comprehensive medical insurance and a medical emergency service however, there are some further precautions that parties need to consider:

### **10.2 Groups travelling within EU Countries**

Reciprocal health agreements have been established within EU countries. The benefit of this is that frequently, medical treatment can be provided free of charge, avoiding the need to claim back money from insurers. Eligible group members will need to have form E111 to benefit from reciprocal arrangements. This form can be obtained from Post Offices and is contained within leaflet T6, Health Advice for Travellers. The form E111 needs to be completed and stamped at a Post Office prior to travel to be valid.

### **10.3 Groups Travelling outside EU Countries**

Leaflet T6, Health Advice for Travellers, gives advice as to required and recommended immunisations for the areas you intend to visit or travel through. As requirements can change rapidly, it is worth rechecking these with your GP, the appropriate embassy or consulate. Remember to leave sufficient time to obtain the necessary vaccinations and bear in mind that these are likely to incur a fee.

#### **10.4 Parental Permission for Medical Treatment**

It is essential to obtain the written permission of parents or guardians prior to travel for group leaders to carry out the following:

- To administer prescription medication required by students
- To administer pain relief medication as appropriate (e.g. paracetamol)
- To sign for medical operations to proceed in the event that this is deemed necessary by a qualified medical practitioner.

#### **10.5 Group Members' Medication**

Record any particular medical details or medication requirements of all members of the group. These will be necessary to administer medication and will assist in the event of a serious incident.

It is essential to bring sufficient supplies of medication to last the tour (allowing also for any unforeseen delays). The same brands may not be available locally.

#### **10.6 First Aid Kit**

Many LEA's and school governing bodies stipulate that a first aid kit be carried on all school tours. This policy may specify the contents of such a kit. Headache and stomach ache remedies such as paracetamol are worthwhile but **must not** form part of the first aid kit and should be administered and controlled by one member of staff only.

#### **10.7 First Aid Qualification**

We recommend that at least one member of staff should have completed a first aid course. Your LEA or governing body may insist on this or other similar qualifications. If you are leading a very large group, you may wish to consider taking a school nurse or well qualified first aider specifically to look after your group.

### **11 OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION**

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#### **11.1 LEA and Union Guidelines**

Your LEA, teacher union or governing body will have guidelines relating to school travel. It is well worth studying these recommendations which will have been established with the help of group leaders over many years. They may highlight specific requirements of your governing body that you may not have considered.

- 11.2 HASPEV (Health & Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits).** This is a government booklet designed to help head teachers, teachers, governors and others to ensure that pupils stay safe and healthy on school visits. Copies of this booklet are available from DFES Publications Centre – Tel. 0845 6022260 or write to:
- DFES Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Sudbury  
Suffolk, CO10 62Q

Enquiries about the DFES Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits and the supplements can be made to the DFES Pupil Health and Safety Team on tel. no 0207 925 5536.

### **11.3 School Travel Organiser's Handbook**

This is an annual publication which covers all aspects of school travel in considerable detail and in a practical manner. It is published by Hobsons Publishing PLC, Bateman Street, Cambridge, CB2 1LZ.

## **FINALLY**

Equity is committed to the continual improvement of safety standards on school tours and always appreciates the assistance of group leaders.

Please report anything that causes concern to Equity and to the appropriate person on the spot (hotelier, coach driver or other supplier). This makes it easier for Equity to take the matter up later with the supplier concerned and obtain positive results.

Should you have any further comments on safety, please address them to 'The Overseas Quality Controller' at Equity.

Equity has taken every care to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate. Equity do strongly recommend teachers to consult current guidelines and cannot be held responsible for omissions due to changes in Government and Education Authority Policy.