

TRR Incident Response Plan

Introduction

Accidents happen, it's only a matter of time. We at TRR do our best to prevent issues via:

- Policies
- Safety Protocol
- Exceptional Planning
- Extensive Training
- Decent Equipment
- Great oversight

Despite these precautions, incidents will eventually take place. Your response to this unfortunate turn of events can greatly limit damage to our participants, yourself, and the TRR Organization.

Incident Response Steps

1. **Preparation:** This is covered by our Policies, Waivers, Training, Contact Lists, and Procedures (AKA: The Incident Response Plan).
2. **Identification:** Situational Awareness is critical. As Trip Leaders, we are frequently monitoring the venue conditions (weather, water levels, hazards, etc.). We also monitor our participants (Signs of Hypothermia, Fatigue, Mental Conditions (frequent swims dampen confidence, fear, etc.), Time of Day (watch those lunch & play breaks – keep to your planned schedule).
3. **Containment:** There's a wide variety of containment practices we take to limit our exposure:
 - Extra thermal gear
 - Extra Food & Water
 - Spare gear like a breakdown paddle
 - First Aid Kits & Training
 - Boxing out rescues, especially when rope work is involved
 - A Communications Plan
 - Incident Report Form & gathering witness statements
4. **Eradication:** Sometimes we can fix issues with replacement gear like a spare paddle. Think of this as your "Backup Plan". Another form of eradication is choosing an earlier takeout if that is feasible.
5. **Recovery:** More serious incidents may require a recovery of some sort. Consider Swiftwater Rescue Training, First Aid & CPR Training and by all means practice these skills periodically. The ASSERT acronym may be a helpful mnemonic for the lifecycle of a recovery:
 - **Assess the situation:** Heads Up/Down, Stable, Nearby hazards, Access, Gear & Personnel. Develop an Initial Plan (and often a Plan B).
 - **Signal/Set Safety:** Communications can be challenging in loud rapids, which is why we carry whistles and use hand/paddle signals. Always think "What If", where possible set both Upstream and Downstream Safety. I also advise staging at least one person on both sides of the accident zone (Left & Right). This facilitates getting a line across the stream and sometimes aids in communication and better visibility.
 - **Stabilize:** In most rescues, getting hands on contact is a life saver. The victims confidence will soar when someone makes contact and the onsite rescuer has many more options available to them. Being able to prevent a tippy boat from falling or holding the torso so the person can breathe buys lots of time. Stabilization lines or tag lines can be very helpful.

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- **Extricate:** Tossing a throw rope or unpinning a boat are examples of extrication.
 - **Render First Aid:** More serious incidents may require First Aid. Make certain your training is current and your First Aid Kit is adequate.
 - **Transport:** Some incidents may require a means to transport the victim to an accessible area (like the take-out perhaps). The first decision is whether to move or not. Back injuries require special gear we do not carry – send someone for help. For less serious situations you may be able to assist in walking out or hitch a ride on a raft.
6. **Lessons Learned:** All incidents on TRR Activities require the completion of a TRR Incident Form. You should carry a couple with an ink pen in your First Aid Kit. Be complete as possible and don't forget to gather witness statements – huge issue for liability. If you make a mistake on the form, strike out – don't erase (thus the recommendation for an ink pen). These are sent to TRR National where they are reviewed and may be shared with our Insurance Carrier. TRR will also help in the post-incident analysis and may make recommendations for improvement: "Lessons Learned". Your Chapter may choose to replenish any consumables (like First Aid Kit items) and repair/replace damaged gear.

Communications Plan

A written Communications Plan is a vital tool for Incident Response. For major events, TRR sets up a registration system that gathers key information like:

- Name
- Phone Number – Especially Cell Phone numbers
- Email Address
- Address
- Alternate Contact

Trip Leaders can use this contact list to call off a trip or move the venue if conditions warrant such an action. The Chapter Coordinator's contact information is important to have as well. The Chapter Coordinator will need to be contacted for any serious incident so they can coordinate with TRR National. This contact information is also necessary should the victim require Emergency Medical Services or be taken to a close by hospital. Do not talk to the media or others outside of TRR, refer them to TRR National.

Conclusion

A documented Incident Response Plan with a Communications Strategy is very helpful in getting our participants the help they need in a timely manner. Incident Response Plans also protect the overall TRR organization by providing a checklist on what to do when plans go South and stress levels are high.