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IAATO Assessing New Activities Checklist

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Information Paper Submitted by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)

Summary

Technology and the desire for individuals to undertake new activities can create challenges for managers. IAATO members concluded that there was value in ensuring a clear framework for operators considering any new activity would alleviate pressure and maintain an approach of proactive, rather than reactive, management.

Background:

IAATO is committed to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. Industry peer reviewed guidelines have been the backbone of IAATO Members operations in Antarctica.

As evidenced by the recent discussions in ATCM, COMNAP, SCAR and within IAATO on unmanned aerial vehicles for example, advances in technology and the desire for individuals to undertake ‘new’ activities can occasionally result in managers having to be reactive rather than proactive.

Following discussions amongst IAATO Members it was generally agreed that without undermining the place of activity specific guidelines, it would be precautionary to have a clear, simple framework to assist any operator in their assessment and planning of a new activity.

Consequently, the IAATO Field Operations Committee has prepared a new checklist for assessing new activities, which was adopted during the IAATO 2016 Annual Meeting in Newport, RI. This checklist has been promulgated to IAATO Members and will be incorporated into the IAATO Field Operations Manual.

The aim of this checklist is to provide a decision-making framework for assessing a new activity prior to offering, or agreeing to support, the activity. In this context “new activity” is defined as a new activity for the operator, or a new activity within the Antarctic Treaty Area. Special activities in the Antarctic can be defined as any activity beyond standard tourism where visiting Antarctic wildlife, wilderness and historic sites of interest through ship cruising, landings with walking tours, small boat cruising and general observation under guidance from field staff.

Members must demonstrate that all their activities comply with ATCM Measure 4 (2004) and that appropriate arrangements for health and safety, search and rescue (SAR), and medical care and evacuation are in place.

This checklist complements the specific guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures found in the IAATO Field Operations Manual and highlights that any new activity should be included in the Members Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency Contingency Plans.

Appendix 1: IAATO Assessing New Activities Checklist

Prior to offering, or agreeing to support, any activity, please ensure that it is included in your operator's authorization (Advance Notification, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Waste Management Permit (WMP) as relevant).

Introduction

The aim of this checklist is to provide a decision-making framework for assessing a new activity (to the operator or to the Antarctic Treaty Area) prior to offering, or agreeing to support, the activity. Special activities in the Antarctic can be defined as any activity beyond standard tourism where visiting Antarctic wildlife, wilderness and historic sites of interest through ship cruising, landings with walking tours, small boat cruising and general observation under guidance from field staff.

Operators must demonstrate that all their activities comply with ATCM Measure 4 (2004) and that appropriate arrangements for health and safety, search and rescue (SAR), and medical care and evacuation are in place.

This checklist complements the specific guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures found in the IAATO Field Operations Manual. The new activity should be included in the Operator's Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency Contingency Plans.

General

- Consider whether you have the relevant expertise, and field experience or certified guides to undertake the proposed activity.
- If no specific guidelines exist for your activity, consider if the activity is appropriate for the Antarctic region with regards to safety and the environment.
- The activity should be detailed in full in your Antarctic permit/authorization application with your Competent Authority.
- The activity should have no more than a minor or transitory impact.
- The activity should have an educational element enhancing the visitor's appreciation of the intrinsic values of Antarctica.

Safety Recommendations

- Include the new activity in your risk management process, which may include, for example, undertaking a risk assessment and preparing a Standard Operating Procedure.
- Your overarching emergency contingency plans should be reviewed to consider the new activity and potential problems, and amended as appropriate.
- All staff and personnel involved in the activity should be aware of and understand the Risk Assessment, Standard Operating Procedure and Emergency Contingency Plans.
- Train your field team and support staff in the new activity.
- Exercises should be undertaken on a regular basis to cover the most likely and severe potential accidents and incidents. Have a reporting structure in place for accidents, incidents and near misses so that lessons can be learned from near misses to prevent incidents and accidents.

- A communication procedure should be in place for the activity including an activity log. The log can be used as an audit trail if an accident or an incident were ever to occur.
- Ensure an alternative activity is available in case the activity is aborted.

Environmental Recommendations

- The activity must have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment.
- The activity should meet your biosecurity Standard Operating Procedure and should not increase the likelihood, for example, of introducing non-native species.
- The field team should be aware of the site specific conditions and wildlife in the area of operation.
- All IAATO Wildlife Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures should have been studied and understood before undertaking the activity.
- A waste management plan should be in place.

If the activity involves wildlife, or wildlife is encountered during the activity then field teams must be prepared to alter the activity if continuing is likely to have more than a minor or transitory impact.