

# Safety Management System 2009



## 1. Policy Statement

Acorn Venture Ltd (trading as Acorn Travel Group, Acorn Adventure, Encounters Europe, Acorn Ski, The School Travel Company, Diverse Earth, Acorn in India) is committed to the highest possible levels of safety and will take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of staff and clients at every stage of their tour.

To help achieve this we:

- 1.1. will maintain a written Health and Safety policy to the standards required by The School Travel Forum (STF) and in line with the HSE document HSG65
- 1.2. will train our staff and advise our clients and suppliers to maintain a positive safety culture.
- 1.3. set and maintain standards which are measurable, achievable and realistic
- 1.4. measure and review our performance internally on a regular basis and via an external auditor annually
- 1.5. ensure that our Safety Management System ('SMS') meets or exceeds the minimum standards set by the STF

SIGNED:

JA Gardiner  
Managing Director, Acorn Venture Ltd  
Tuesday, 06 January 2009

## 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 Policy Making is the responsibility of the Directors of Acorn Venture Ltd. who shall ensure:
  - 2.1.1. the development and implementation of a safety management policy
  - 2.1.2. the implementation of individual policies is carried out by competent persons
  - 2.1.3. that there are enough resources available to implement the policies.
- 2.2 Planning is the responsibility of the Managing Director who shall ensure that:
  - 2.1.4. competent and trained persons are consulted in the development and implementation of the SMS
  - 2.1.5. monitoring and feedback systems are in place
  - 2.1.6. trends identified by monitoring are examined
  - 2.1.7. the company is up to date with current best practices
- 2.3 Implementation of the systems is the responsibility of the Head of Safety and Compliance who shall ensure that:
  - 2.1.8. all staff are sufficiently trained and that they are aware as to their role and responsibilities within the SMS.
  - 2.1.9. staff are aware of the need to report any weaknesses in or failures of the system and that they are reported to their manager.
- 2.4 Review of the SMS is the responsibility of the Managing Director and the Head of Safety and Compliance who shall ensure that:
  - 2.1.10. all incidents, accidents and near-misses are reported, logged and reviewed at least annually.
  - 2.1.11. an external auditor is appointed to review annually the SMS.
  - 2.1.12. the SMS is reviewed by the Managing Director on an annual basis.

## 3. Hotels and accommodation

- 3.1 All hotels used by the company will provide, as a minimum: an accommodation contract or agent agreement is signed confirming (as a minimum) that the accommodation conforms to local and national fire, safety and hygiene standards and will have current liability insurance cover for the duration of the contract. Wherever possible, copies of the relevant documents will be obtained. Confirmation that the contract conditions are still being met will be obtained every three years.
- 3.2 No accommodation shall be used if they cannot provide these. The replies to standard audits will be assessed by the Head of Safety and Compliance (HSC) according to the standard scoring matrix and any section scoring over 6 will be investigated by the HSC or a suitably trained auditor before the accommodation is used.
- 3.3 In addition, the Company shall inspect and audit:
  - 3.1.1. All accommodation used or expected to be used for more than five groups per year, at least once every three years.
  - 3.1.2. A random selection of accommodation who returned standard audits. Where serious discrepancies are noted, the HSC (or suitably trained auditor) will undertake remedial action before standard audits are accepted from the accommodation again.
- 3.4 All inspections will be completed by staff who have been trained according to STF guidelines .
- 3.5 The Head of Safety and Compliance shall maintain a record of all audits and ensure that all accommodation is inspected as per paragraph 3 above. All paper records of audits, follow-up notices etc, will be kept in the property's safety file.
- 3.6 The HSC shall ensure that all audits which show where an accommodation does not conform to the standards ('non-conforms') are followed up and resolved to the company's satisfaction. This will be logged on the computer database (\\Acornserver\shared folder\School Travel Forum\Accommodation).
- 3.7 All safety issues reported by Party Leaders shall be investigated by the HSC. Where deemed necessary, the property concerned shall not be used until it has been audited and any concerns raised

are rectified. Otherwise, a warning shall be added to that property's information sheet (which is sent to clients). All Party Leader Reports are kept by Product Managers.

### 3.8 Minor Non-Conform

Where an audit reveals areas of minor non-conformity, the auditor shall:

- 3.1.3. write to the accommodation within 14 days explaining what areas we'd like to see changed
- 3.1.4. note the non-compliance on the 'accommodation audit record'
- 3.1.5. follow up by writing again to the hotel and getting written confirmation that the changes have been made OR amend the information sent to clients to highlight any risks that the accommodation has not changed.

### 3.9 Unsafe

If the 'non-conform' is of a serious nature, the auditor shall:

- 3.1.6. advise the relevant Product Manager(s) that an accommodation should no longer be used until such time as 'conform' or 'minor non-conform' status is achieved and the accommodation has been audited again.
- 3.1.7. Remove the hotel / centre from all programmes with immediate effect
- 3.1.8. Record the hotel / centre as UNSAFE on the accommodation audit record.

## 4. UK Coaches

The Transport Coordinator shall ensure that:

- 4.1 a copy of the operator's licence, motor vehicle insurance and public liability insurance is obtained prior to using any UK operator.
- 4.2 we endeavour to use coach operators who are CPT, Coach Marque or similarly accredited.
- 4.3 we ensure that all coach companies sign our 'minimum standards agreement' (appendix 2) prior to being used. This stipulates that the coach operator will comply with all applicable laws and codes of practice. It also stipulates a set of minimum safety standards regarding drivers hours, driver vetting (including CRB or SCRO), insurance and vehicle age.
- 4.4 a list of 'regular-use' operators is maintained for any operator used or that we intend to use more than five times in any one year.
- 4.5 obtain each year a copy of the operator licence, public liability insurance and motor vehicle insurance for 'regular-use' operators
- 4.6 all 'regular-use' operators are inspected prior to use and thereafter at least once every three years.
- 4.7 a list of the audit status of regular use operators is maintained and reviewed annually
- 4.8 only companies from the regular use list shall be used except where:
  - 4.1.1. availability is strictly limited (such as in peak periods)
  - 4.1.2. none of our regular-use operators are within a reasonable distance of the pick-up point (i.e. drivers hours regulations might be compromised)
  - 4.1.3. an unforeseeable event occurs (such as a breakdown)
  - 4.1.4. a client specifically requests a company not on our regular-use list.

## 5. Non-UK Coaches

The Transport Coordinator shall ensure that:

- 5.1 prior to use, non-UK operators sign our 'minimum standards agreement'. This stipulates that the coach operator will comply with all applicable laws and codes of practice. It also stipulates a set of minimum safety standards regarding drivers hours, driver vetting, insurance and vehicle age.
- 5.2 where we anticipate using non-UK operators more than 5 times in any one year, then they shall be audited and the relevant paperwork inspected and held as per UK regular use operators.

## 6. Airlines / Ferries / Eurotunnel / Rail / Public Transport

All of these are nationally regulated and it is not felt that we can take any additional measures.

## 7. Agents and Ground Handlers

Our Head of Safety and Compliance shall ensure that:

- 7.1 all agents sign a minimum standards agreement (appendix 3) which states that any accommodation offered to us will have as a minimum a current fire certificate, appropriate insurance cover and, where possible, a hygiene certificate or local equivalent.
- 7.2 Accommodation offered by agents are subject to the same 'standard' and 'supplementary' audits as those contracted directly
- 7.3 a record of such audits shall be maintained and the agent apprised of the audit standard achieved.
- 7.4 if any accommodation is deemed 'unsafe' at a supplementary audit, the agent will be asked to hold a formal review with the Head of Safety and Compliance and training will be offered to the agent's staff on completing the standard audit.
- 7.5 We try to avoid using agents for coaching services overseas. However, where an agent is asked to secure an overseas coach on our behalf, the coach company will be asked to sign and return the same minimum standards agreement as UK operators.
- 7.6 where agents are asked to supply services which would be the subject of a safety review had they been booked directly, the agent shall be asked to sign an agreement to use the same minimum standards as outlined in this document.

## 8. Visits and Excursions

All visits contained in our 'Visit Information Sheets' or in our brochures shall be assessed by the Head of Safety and Compliance and graded as per STF guidelines. See appendix 4.

## 9. Inspection visits

In order that group leaders have the opportunity to carry out their own risk assessments, every group shall be given the opportunity to visit their chosen accommodation. To facilitate this we offer all confirmed groups 2 nights B+B accommodation for two people, ferry crossings (or a contribution towards flight costs) and insurance.

## 10. Safety Information Prior to Travel

We shall, on request, endeavour to provide whatever safety information may be required by clients.

## 11. Emergency Procedures and Duty Officer

- 11.1 We shall maintain a Duty Officer rota which ensures that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, a senior member of staff will also be on duty at all times.
- 11.2 We have and maintain an Emergency Procedure document which defines how an emergency will be managed. A copy of this document shall be made available to clients on request.
- 11.3 All clients and suppliers are made aware of our emergency contact numbers prior to the commencement of a tour.
- 11.4 The Duty Officer pack shall at all times contain details of all clients travelling and contact details for all suppliers.

## 12. Training

It is the responsibility of the Head of Safety and Compliance to ensure that all staff who may be asked to contribute in any way to the SMS policy are properly trained. In addition, the Head of Safety and Compliance shall ensure that all staff are familiar with an outline of the SMS policy.

## 13. Reporting

- 13.1 Groups are given three opportunities to report accidents/incidents/near misses. These are:
- 13.1.1. Party Leader report form. This can be used to highlight any minor problems. They are kept with the Product Manager and are read by every member of the team involved.
  - 13.1.2. Hazard report and Problem Resolution forms. These are sent to every group before travel and offer advice as well as the opportunity to formally advise us in writing of any problems or hazards. These too are read by every member of the team and are to be acted upon by the Product Manager and Head of Safety and Compliance. These are stored in the SMS filing cabinet and reviewed annually by the Head of Safety and Compliance.
  - 13.1.3. By telephone via the Duty Officer system (see section 11)
- 13.2 Should an incident occur, it is the Duty Officer's responsibility to log all actions during the incident. This report is then discussed each Friday morning at a meeting overseen by the Head of Safety and Compliance. This will enable us to learn from each incident. In addition, these reports are stored in the SMS filing cabinet and reviewed annually by the Head of Safety and Compliance.

## 14. Activity Centres

Our Acorn Adventure Activity Centres are covered by our comprehensive Health and Safety Policy (Adventure) and fall outside the scope and requirements of this Safety Management System.

# Appendix 1

## Minimum Standards Agreement

As part of our ongoing commitment to the safety and welfare of our clients, we'd be grateful if you would complete the following:

Do you have a fire certificate / proof that your fire installations meet local and national standards? (please send a copy if yes) YES / NO

Do you have current public liability insurance? (please send a copy if yes) YES / NO

If you provide food, do you have a hygiene certificate / proof that your food provision conforms to local/national standards? (please send a copy if yes) YES / NO

In addition, please confirm, by signing this document that you agree to:

- 1) Provide each child with his/her own bed (no sharing double beds)
- 2) Provide twin/single rooms for staff and a single room for a coach driver.
- 3) Provide the Party Leader with a Master key on occasion if requested
- 4) Maintain all rooms and furniture in a fit state for use by children
- 5) Maintain all fire and safety installations in a fit state
- 6) Provide all services requested where deposits have been paid and, where this proves impossible, reimburse Acorn Venture Ltd. any extra expense incurred by your failure to provide these services.
- 7) Ensure that a member of your staff can be contacted in the event of an emergency 24 hours a day when our groups are in residence.
- 8) Ensure that no member of your staff enters a room occupied by children unless accompanied by a member of staff from that group.
- 9) Inform us immediately should any substantial changes be made to your property.

Many thanks and we look forward to working with you over the coming months and years.

## Appendix 2

### Minimum Standards Agreement – COACH CONTRACT

In line with our Safety Management System and in order to fulfil our obligations to our clients, we'd be grateful if you would read, agree and sign this document before sending it back to us.

- 1) Please send a copy of your Operators Licence
- 2) Please send a copy of your motor vehicle insurance(s)
- 3) Please send a copy of your public liability insurance
- 4) Confirmation of any trade affiliations (Coach Marque, CPT etc)

By signing this document, you agree that:

- 1) Your company, staff and vehicles all conform to national, local, trade and other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice.
- 2) All tours and transfers will be carried out in accordance with EU and UK regulations governing driver hours/tachographs.
- 3) All drivers used for our tours and transfers will be CRB checked and be suitable to work with young people.
- 4) Appropriate insurance cover for the vehicle will be in effect for the duration of any tour or transfer
- 5) No vehicle used will be over 10 years old, unless we agree prior to the tour or transfer that an older vehicle may be used
- 6) All vehicles used will be fitted with working seatbelts.

Please be aware that we cannot use your services until this document is received. Many thanks for your cooperation.

# Appendix 3

## Accommodation Supplier Contract

By signing this document, the agent agrees that:

- 1) All accommodation offered to Acorn for use by school groups will have a current fire certificate (or local equivalent) and conforms to local and national regulations governing the provision of fire safety equipment.
- 2) All accommodation offered to Acorn for use by school groups will have in place appropriate insurance cover.
- 3) Where the accommodation is to provide meals, the agent will endeavour to provide a hygiene certificate (or local equivalent).
- 4) Where Acorn or its clients finds faults which could affect the safety of groups, the agent will work with the accommodation to improve these failings and provide a report to Acorn that improvements have been made.
- 5) Acorn will be given the opportunity to visit and audit at least 20% of the accommodation offered to its clients each year.
- 6) Should any accommodation be deemed to be 'unsafe' by Acorn, then Acorn will hold a review and training session with the agent's staff to improve their understanding of the standards expected.

## Appendix 4

### **STF Excursions and Visits Safety Management**

1 Members will ensure all excursions and visits included in final itineraries are categorized.

2 Members will take reasonable measures to ensure they have the internal risk management procedures in place, specifically:

2.1 For Categories 1-5

- Accident, incident & near miss monitoring.
- Customer feedback monitoring.
- Staff inspection visit feedback monitoring.

2.2 For Category 2

- Form EV1 complete
- Assessment EV2 complete

2.3 For Category 3

- Form EV3 complete and made available to clients on request
- 'Water reminder' in itineraries

2.4 For Categories 4 & 5

- Where not covered by a specific STF code of practice, individual risk assessments, which assess instructor competence, means of safety management, external assessment, operating licenses and liability insurance cover.

3 All assessments will be reviewed by a competent person, where excursions fail to demonstrate reasonable safety measures for visitors, including children, members shall not offer that excursion and/or make such information available to group leaders who are considering using the excursion independently.