

Notes from Closing Sessions of the 2008 Wilderness Risk Management Conference

We asked participants to answer three questions during these sessions.

1. What was your “AHA” moment or biggest learning point during the conference
2. What are the 1-2 tangible things you plan to implement in your program in the next 3-6 months?
3. What else do you want to know?

These are the transcriptions of participant’s answers.

What was your “AHA” moment?

- That there is still grey area surrounding prescription medications in the field.
- The need for more unity and continuity in the industry.
- Need to live program to institute a change.
- Our program does not have a critical response plan and needs to test it with scenarios.
- Folks are implementing SPOT a lot!
- Managing legal issues after serious incident- get only guided questions.
- Learning about brain development age and how that can affect judgment, how it applies to the age of guides.
- How much human factors (and the spectrum) that makes the number of accidents.
- Gender brain development that causes different learning styles.
- Don’t need to reinvent, people are willing to help.
- Waivers can be simple.
- Our risk management is not that bad (good plans, small issues) and similar challenges.
- Communication of information about programs through new media channels.
- Need to update instructor training to address what to do if something happens.
- Look at pre-trip information. 1. Quality of information 2. Look at how a waiver fits in 3. Legality of prescription.
- Focus first on the “things that will kill you” in your risk management plan There are a whole bunch of organizations that are not doing everything right.
- Implications for carrying prescription medication.
- Convince parents of inherent risks, not just signing releases.
- Value of individual sharing-low frequency, high severity.
- Awareness of hunger- forum for dialogue.

- The reality and impact of “death” tragedies.
- Legal implications of an international program.
- Application of a risk management plan and all its components-NOLS India, how it can work right.
- Simple solutions to overwhelming industry challenges for a small program.
- Magnitude of responsibility.
- We are very ineffective as an industry about sharing our good practices, learning and experiences.
- How much is not known (by conference participants) when so much is known.
- In marketing materials use contrasting photos of what conditions can be like.
- Clear use of the words, “What Kills”
- Although NOLS and Outward Bound seem to set the standard, it doesn’t mean that’s how all programs need to operate.
- We do not have to fit a mold, find what works for our programs.
- The WRMC should not serve to keep you up at night. It should help us sleep.
- Don’t try and do it all. Just five things **really well!**
- Too much focus on what could go wrong without framing benefits.
- Thinking realistically about what one knows and doesn’t know.
- Building a Risk Management plan.
- Conceptuality how much an EAP does not cover.
- Having big picture Risk Management plan, not just components.
- Similar struggles/ sharing with others
- Industry forward thinking
- Informed consent importance
- Creative staff training ideas
- A lot more people in this than I realized
- A lot more is known in risk management than I realized
- So many resources and presentations available
- So many little things organizations can do to improve risk management
- Bring medical forms with group
- Chris Barnes “list ten, divide in half, cross off the bottom two.
- Being upfront and open with parents about risks involved. Parents will understand why child was enrolled when things go wrong.
- Legal workshops - i.e. what to do after an accident.
- How overwhelming crisis situations can be and how unprepared we are
- Legality of medications in the field
- Understanding lawsuits is not just monetary.
- Different programs, same issues
- Second wave of technology in Wilderness with new industry on the way
- The legal way to handle things may not be the ethical way.
- The personal impact of accidents.
- Looking at what can kill versus everything else.

What are the 1-2 things you plan to implement in the next 3-6 months?

- Review of policies and Protocol. Specifically with regards to medicine
- Put more effort into making our program more transparent and better understood by parents and students.
- Focus on more meaningful training
- Revamp Emergency Action Plan and include different scenarios
- Stress the need for more congruency between manual and actions
- Take a look at staff training
- Look into the legality of a medical question
- Run a critical scenario or plan
- Up the number of medical scenarios and SAR
- Start a job fair, this should provide good feedback
- Look at training and focus on the most important thing.
- Communication with parents should be different
- Devise a concise plan for training staff. This conference provided me with a new way to approach it.
- Be in contact and follow up with people in the industry more than once a year
- Work on the weak parts of our risk management plan
- Update our health and safety plan to include post incident response
- Look at risk communication to families and participants
- Check with an attorney concerning advising a physician about prescription medication and state-to-state differences.
- Address the question, "Is our Program Safe?"
- Gain as much experience possible to get into the industry
- Set up a protocol for emergency evacuation
- Set up a IJT module for my own organization
- Update our risk management plans
- Write a release for inter-organizational work (other agencies, sub-contractor, etc.)
- Have pre-course information materials to parents be more specific
- Explore and play with spot technology
- Coordinate data. Set the review of statistics from UK for accident /incident statistics
- Research for new legal counsel
- Emergency Action Plan- do a dry run for staff training
- Coordinate marketing materials with our mission
- Have a annual review for administrators of our emergency plan
- Review policies and procedures
- Have a physician advisor
- Review our policy of carrying prescription medication
- Set a date for a practice run of our emergency action plan
- Develop a new program with greater focus on creative staff training in student management

- Review our company's mission and philosophy with staff and how each component supports the mission
- Construct a standardized data collection system for injuries on federal lands
- Build a curriculum to teach staff technical skills
- Create "field packet" or "panic cards" for staff in the field
- Identify things that will kill people- create a risk management plan
- Keep staff current in risk management
- Provide case studies for training staff
- Make our first contact with parents /students personal, not a form
- Put into place a risk management plan and get folks to follow it
- Set up a wilderness risk management conference in Taiwan or China
- Develop a staff growth system
- Include judgment training
- Implement mock trials
- Gather information and books mentioned in this conference
- Review our risk management plan
- Emphasize the necessity of balance in skills, certification and GP
- Practice scenarios related to CJ's in organization
- Redo our incident report form and use it as a teaching tool
- Research more training options
- Integrate principles into leadership training program
- Go through our admissions form to be sure the right information is being gathered
- Have each department evaluate risk management
- Visit outdoored.com to look at the list serve. Also check isaninfo.com
- Practice the emergency action plan and protocols in scenarios and staff training
- Practice the EAP with staff
- Personal practical medical experience
- Find out local laws regarding medication administration in wilderness programs
- Review the program offerings and make sure that they are in-line with organization's goals
- Review documentation and update the language for the Risks/Rape log

What else do you want to know?

- Specific field-based questions about programs (e.g. – what is a specific student/staff ratio; how many students do you have)
- Risk Management models equations or tools. (e.g. – mental models for decision-making; practical tools to implement the Risk Plan.)
- More specific issues for small programs.
- Coverage of psychology.

- Have courses labeled according to level they are speaking to (i.e. – basic, intermediate or advanced)
- Session on how to create realistic training scenarios for staff training, possibly lead by Claire Dallot.
- Group gatherings for different types of programs (i.e. – day, national and international with a focus and facilitator).
- Attracting, interviewing and assessing new staff.
- Staff retention
- Marketing
- How to best work with other companies with similar focus sharing training, staff, policy, and protocol (a model of this would be great).
- Development of a governing body for this outdoor industry.
- Current trends, standards and direction of the industry.
- Cognitive psychology related to outdoor recreation.
- Users of federal lands – teaching them how to properly use the area.
- More conversations for specific groups in the industry (i.e. – like the meeting with college groups).
- Conference should be more accessible to more people in the industry.
- Beautiful place – more planned/organized trips in the area for us to enjoy it.
- Pick a place that allows for stewardship/reaching out.
- Pick a location that may not be so beautiful/expensive since we are inside all day and don't really get to experience the area.
- Live Internet feed of sessions.
- More general sessions
- Smaller class sizes
- What to do if your organization thinks they have the perfect lawyer?
- What other universities are doing in programming, especially rentals?
- What is the best approach for newcomers to get into the industry?
- International sharing on best practices and standards - specifically including other regions of America, Asia, Nepal and India.
- What really are the “industry standards”, and who says so?
- Do we really need to have such a large focus on legal issues at the WRMC?
- More about best practices for staff retention.
- Strategies for attracting and retaining diverse staff.
- Causal factors of unsafe acts that are science-based (i.e. – research to identify the causal factors.)
- What's new that is not being talked about enough?
- Where is the next conference?
- How do programs evaluate staff?
- How do you know what you're doing is effective?
- Advocacy
- Targeted workshops (i.e. – secondary schools).
- Communal dining – better for networking.
- Color-coded nametags help.

- Great level of professionalism.
- What was the first outdoor education certification?
- Session on entrepreneurship in the outdoor industry.
- Would like to hear from families of participants and staff injured or killed – how to operate and communicate with them.
- Read the book “Me Talk Pretty Someday” by David Sedaris.
- Feedback from other industries (e.g. – military).
- Formal/structured or just more time with similar programs (i.e. – grouped into “like” organizations)
- Some kind of entertainment/social events.
- More time for questions and answers and stories/experiences from instructors and speakers.
- “After Hours” events pertaining to the conference.
- Full staff training plan (methods, curriculum, etc.)
- More advanced programs (post-conference)
- Training/methods/strategies for volunteers in context of liability.
- Formalized opportunities for like programs to share ideas/strategies.
- Culturally different views/strategies with Risk Management.
- How do we move forward as an industry?
- Fine details of running programs (i.e. – driving, swimming, training, etc.)
- More legal information.
- Time allotted for focus groups after regular conference hours with assigned moderator.
- Whatever Kent Clemens has to say.
- Bring psychology pieces to risk – wilderness therapists/wilderness therapy programs.
- Bring in more case studies
- How to synthesize the information we have received.
- Workshop on college outdoor programming.
- Open conference with hot topics, updates “where we are today, where we are going” and “breaking news you can use”.
- “Dings” for WRMC website – new postings, information and important events.
- Not clear on legal issues regarding waivers and legal documentation.
- Why there are not more standards in the outdoor industry?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current industry standards?
- Practical staff training curriculum and techniques.
- Industry standards and trends regarding risk management (i.e. – vehicles, climbing standards, group-instructor ratios, etc.).
- Case studies/Discussion about changing cultures.
- Interacting with Regulatory agencies.
- Why aren’t more land managers at WRMC?
- NPS Office conference session(s)
- Smaller groups of sessions
- Speakers from other professions about R.M.

- Basic, Intermediate and advanced tracks
- RM 101 for field instructors
- RM roundtables with similar members (group by behavioral, therapeutic, etc.
- Committee re-convenes soon after conference to collaborate with land managers and discuss next year.
- More open time with legal panel.
- Discussion about standardizing protocols industry-wide
- Age specific RM
- Volunteer/Service days
- Training staff to be risk managers (very popular and needed)
- Bulletin board to communicate with each other.
- Opportunities for mentoring
- RM within organizations with few resources.