

Scenario

You are the solo leader with an Adventure Education school, leading a group of five eighteen year-olds on a hiking course in the North Cascades, WA. It is mid-June. The route is primarily off-trail, you have done this route several times before, but in later summer. It is 6pm at the end of a long day of hiking, and everyone is tired. You have just hiked up a pass, and remember the descent on the other side is a steep but easy talus slope, leading to a good campsite by a lake.

When you arrive at the top of the pass, however, and find a snow field on the other side. The snowslope is gentle at first, but there is a rollover about 15 paces down the slope. You can't see past the rollover. It's a cool day: the snow is quite firm, but soft enough to make a 1" indent when you walk on it. You have not crossed a snowfield with these students before. The group is not equipped with ice axes, etc, but there are enough hiking poles for everyone to have one.

You decide that with a brief step-kicking demonstration you can guide everyone down the snow-slope and proceed to camp and hot tea.

Pre-Mortem

Conduct a pre-mortem test of your decision, considering:

Objective Factors

- List the hazards, observed or potential, in the environment
- Describe what could physically go wrong to cause an injury

Subjective Factors

- Conduct a FACET Test: discuss each of the FACETS in turn and see if it applies to the situation
- Other human factors?

Conclusion

Any changes to your original decision?

References

1. Leemon, Drew and Schimelpfenig, Tod. Risk Management for Outdoor Leaders. National Outdoor Leadership School 2005.
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3. McCammon, Ian. The Role of Training in Recreational Avalanche Accidents in the United States. *Proceedings of the International Snow Science Workshop*, October 2–6, 2000, Big Sky, Montana, pp. 37 – 45.
4. McCammon, Ian. Evidence of heuristic traps in recreational avalanche accidents *Proceedings of the International Snow Science Workshop, Penticton, British Columbia, Sept. 30 – Oct 4, 2002*.
5. The “Experience-Reflection-Learning” graph is adapted by Leemon and Schimelpfenig from Priest, S. (1988) The role of judgment, decision making and problem solving for outdoor leaders. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 11(3), 19-26. (1988)
6. The R.P.D. concept is quoted by McCammon, 2000 from Klein, G. 1998. *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.