NORMALIZATION OF DEVIANCE

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Definitions - Normalization of Deviance

- **Deviation** – a violation of a policy or a variation in practice so that it departs from what a rule or standard requires. Creates an unreasonable increase in risk… (Banga, 2010)

- “People within an organization become so accustomed to a deviant behavior that they don’t consider it as deviant, despite the fact that they far exceed their own rules for safety” (Vaughan, 1996).

- Natural tendency to take shortcuts, deviate from standards. Nothing bad happens, continue, create new norms.
Why Policies and Procedures?

- *Document* an organization’s policy for operation and the procedures necessary to fulfill that policy.

- *Create* an internal control framework.
Policies and Procedures – Four Basic Concepts

- Compliance
- Operational Needs
- Risk Management
- Improvement
Some Well Known Examples

- Space Shuttle Challenger
- Space Shuttle Columbia
- Costa Concordia
- Common denominator
  - Long incubation periods
  - Rule violations
  - Events that accumulated unnoticed
  - Cultural beliefs about hazards that prevented interventions
“Gradualism Phenomenon” (Starbuck & McMilliken, 1988)

- Occurs as a process of steps sometimes over an extended period.

- Behavior doesn’t occur all at once, instead multiple decisions made or avoided with no noticeable negative effects.

- Potential for disaster is never seen as an option until it occurs.
Factors - Normalization of Deviance

- **Institutionalization.** Exposes new staff to deviant behaviors, often performed by authority figures.

- **Socialization.** Will they or won’t they? New staff join the group by adopting the group’s deviant behaviors.

- **Rationalization.** Enables everyone involved to convince themselves that their deviances are not only legitimate, but acceptable and perhaps necessary.
Potential Causes

- Correct information provided about the policy?
- Program failed to train or instruct staff adequately.
- Is the policy routinely ignored by most staff?
- Were there mitigating circumstances that invited the deviation?
Adventure Programs

- Risk Management
- Programs
- Training
- Enrollment, screening, admissions
- Emergency procedures
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Transportation
- Food
- Equipment
- Manuals, policies, procedures
- Marketing/PR
Breakout #1

Identify potential deviances that might occur in adventure programs.
Potential Factors that Account for the Normalization of Deviance in Adventure Programs

- The rules are stupid and inefficient
- Knowledge is imperfect
- I’m breaking the rule for the good of my student(s)
- The rules don’t apply to me/You can trust me
- Staff are afraid to speak up
- Leadership withholding or minimizing findings on program problems
Breakout #2

Brainstorm ways to address the issues associated with normalization of deviance.
Recommendations - Normalization of Deviance

- **Early Intervention.** Become vigilant about deviant behaviors and practices, and be ready to take aggressive steps to stop their occurrence before they reach normalization.

- **Educate.** Deviations are common in most work environments.

- **Emphasize.** Unsafe deviations should not be tolerated.

- **Eliminate.** Deviations must be identified, examined and stopped whenever safety is jeopardized.
Recommendations - Normalization of Deviance

- Teach staff how to conduct uncomfortable conversations.
- Staff need to feel safe when speaking up.
- Realize that oversight and monitoring for rule compliance are never-ending.
?? QUESTIONS ??