

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT FAMILIARISATION

It is important customers are familiar with any vehicle/equipment item they are required to operate/use during an activity where there is a significant degree of risk associated with customers' failing to operate/use vehicles/equipment properly (in line with reasonably expected standards).

If a customer is unfamiliar with the vehicle to be operated or the way/context in which it will be operated in the excursion (off-road for example), then they will need to be familiarised with it before the activity proper commences. You can assume they would be unfamiliar with a vehicle/equipment item if they are unlikely to operate it regularly in their ordinary life (i.e. weekly) in the manner it will be operated in the excursion. Simply because a customer has the required license for a given vehicle category does not exempt them from the need to familiarise themselves with the specific vehicle/equipment item needing to be operated in the activity as well as the circumstances (terrain, weather etc) in/for which it will be operated.

For vehicles – particularly 'adventure' types like buggies, jeeps, quads and boats – the supplier should, before the activity commences:

- show customers where the main operating controls are; how to effectively start, slow down, corner, brake and carry out other safety critical manoeuvres;
- how to adjust seating to provide comfort and clear sight of the road;
- how to prevent glare;
- how/when to communicate with others, including activity leads and other drivers etc.
- how to react in the event of an emergency (how to release flares etc).

It is then for the customer to demonstrate to you their ability to operate the vehicle safely, in accordance with instruction given. If this cannot be demonstrated, the supplier should re-visit the instruction given to customers, asking, 'Is it clear?' 'To-the-point?' 'Understandable?'. Ultimately, any customer unable to demonstrate an ability to operate a vehicle/equipment item to reasonably expected standards should not be permitted to continue to operate/use that vehicle/equipment item (regardless of whether they have the correct license type or not).

Think about providing a vehicle/equipment 'test run' before the activity commences: You may request the customer drives forward and reverses a short distance or accompany them on a short test drive to gauge competency. It is always good to start the activity slowly and build up speed incrementally, giving sufficient time for customers to get to grips with the vehicle/equipment and overcome any initial rustiness/hesitation. Activity staff should monitor customers closely to ensure they are operating vehicles correctly, and to assist and 'step in' where necessary.

Aside from vehicles, you should also ensure customers are familiarised with other types of equipment they may have to use during an excursion, which may pose significant risk if used incorrectly. For example:

- ensuring that a customer knows how to hold, reload and disengage a firearm safely (when on a shooting range or as part of a paintballing event).
- In the context of kayaking, you may decide to initially give customers time to paddle in calmer, shallower waters before moving out to rougher waters and/or practice doing a roll-over.
- For an activity like axe-throwing, you would want to ensure customers are familiar with proper throwing technique, including how to hold the axe, how to launch it, when to let go etc. Let them do a few soft test throws.

- Similarly for archery; how to hold the bow; string the arrow and fire it. Ensure to adjust the bracer.
- In relation to climbing activities, it is crucial customers can demonstrate how to clip in ropes to karabiners safely.

Customers need to be familiarised with vehicles/equipment, not just to keep themselves safe on an activity but others too. For example, a customer who is unable to operate a quad bike safely may end up colliding with other excursion participants. Similarly, for an off-road self-drive jeep excursion, the customer is not only driving themselves but numerous passengers riding in the vehicle with them. Significant risk is posed by these sorts of vehicles not being driven correctly and a pre-activity process of vehicle familiarisation is therefore necessary.