



“BS 8848 is a groundbreaking tool that can help organizers of adventurous activities overseas to benchmark safety to an agreed standard”

Shane Winsor, Expeditions & Fieldwork, Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

With a revised version of BS 8848 to be published in 2014, we assess the contribution this safety standard has already made to managing risk.

The updated version of BS 8848 will be published in spring 2014. The original standard was launched in 2007 at the Royal Geographical Society, after the organization had helped to draft it, following several high-profile deaths overseas.

The standard provides guidance on how to recognize well-organized adventurous activities overseas, as well as setting out good practice in safety management for organizers.

Improved safety

Julian Penney of Wokingham-based Pharos Response says: “I’ve been using BS 8848 since 2008, when I worked for a large schools expedition company. Our product was safe, but BS 8848 prompted us to review and enhance certain areas.

“The business I now lead helps organizations to develop their systems in line with the standard and conduct evaluations of external parties. Many UK-based travel companies have supply chains that include overseas sub-contractors, ranging from local tour operators to those offering white-water rafting excursions.

“For many operators, BS 8848 has catalyzed a much more robust due diligence process of overseas sub-contractors through more detailed checking and internal audit processes.

The standard has helped many providers to improve their safety management systems.”

Year-out activity

Wiltshire-based Year Out Group represents leading UK-based providers of year-out programmes. Its CEO, Richard Oliver, says: “We require our members to demonstrate they comply as much as possible with BS 8848 and encourage those offering group activities to formally self-assess themselves against the standard.”

Year Out Group was represented on the committee that drew up the original standard, and since March 2013 Oliver has chaired the committee that has been steering its review.

“Some members have used BS 8848 as a checklist for the risk and crisis management of overseas projects; other members when selecting leadership teams, participants and third-party providers. BS 8848 has also been used to improve our members’ policies and procedures so that they can manage risk more effectively, while retaining the adventurous nature of their programmes.”

Revised version

We ran an open consultation event at the Royal Geographical Society in June 2013 to encourage input into the revision of BS 8848 from the wider adventure travel market.

The event and engagement work stimulated more than 300 comments on the draft standard. With the standard now used by mainstream adventure travel companies as well as traditional gap-year and activity providers, the consultation provided an opportunity to reflect their views in the revision of BS 8848.

The revised standard will have a greater focus on key processes such as planning and risk assessment, as well as more information for participants about their responsibilities.

“The revised version will be even easier to follow,” Oliver adds. “And the original document was written primarily with group projects in mind, which was problematic for those offering individual activities. This has been addressed. The ultimate benefactors will be those taking part in activities overseas – their safety is paramount, of course.”

To find out more about organizing adventurous activities overseas please go to shop.bsigroup.com/bs8848

