Pre-Event Planning

The goal of the proactive risk management guidelines is to ensure that student organizations plan and host events where everyone involved has a safe and fun experience. Risk management is the process of advising organizations of the potential and perceived risks involved in their activities, as well as supervising organization activities and taking corrective actions and proactive steps to minimize accidental injury and/or loss.

Event Forms on Maroon Link

The Department of Student Activities offers the service of event planning reviews, in which your organization submits an Event Form on Maroon Link and the Student Activities staff responds with relevant information and suggestions. This form should be electronically submitted at least ten (10) business days in advance of your event to ensure a complete review. In some cases, your organization may be required to submit the Event Form on Maroon Link when the event includes any of the following (including but not limited to events involving travel, events involving alcohol, events requiring insurance, and cases in which your organization is seeking resources from our department). To submit an Event Form on Maroon Link, log onto https://maroonlink.tamu.edu with your Net ID and password. Once logged in click on my shortcuts. Find your organization that you want to create an event for and go to the home page. Next, click on “events” and then “create an event”. You will then be asked to create an event name and an additional series of questions will follow. Please make sure to answer each question thoroughly. If your organization does not appear under “My Shortcuts” when you log in please fill out the support form at http://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/maroonlinksupport for additional assistance.
The steps to proper pre-event planning are the following:

1. List all activities and aspects of your event with detail.
2. Identify the risks associated with each activity or aspect. Consider each of the following:
   a. Physical risks- injury, death, travel, food-related illnesses, etc.
   b. Reputation risks- the reputation of your officers and members, the reputation of the whole organization, the reputation of the university
   c. Emotional risks- the emotions of your members, reactions of participants or attendees, sensitive subject matter, potential controversy, etc.
   d. Financial risks- cost reduction, proper budgeting, etc.
   e. Facilities risks- the safety of the facilities for your participants or attendees, the maintenance and clean-up of the facilities, etc.
3. Assess each risk for probability of occurrence and seriousness of consequences. Refer to the Event Planning Matrix for a visual explanation of assessing your risks.
4. Make decisions about how to mitigate each risk identified in Step 2. You can accept, modify, transfer, and/or eliminate each risk based on its assessment in Step 3.
5. Share your plans and risk management actions with the others involved in planning the event, and implement your event according to those decisions.
7. Consult with relevant "campus experts" and resources in the planning of the event.
8. Assess the success of your event after its completion. Document your evaluation information for next year's officers.
Finding and Using Space for your Event

A major benefit offered to Recognized Student Organizations is the use of campus space. There are a variety of spaces across campus available for student use. In order to use a specific space on campus, it must be reserved ahead of time. This also applies to outdoor spaces on campus and 5k runs. Reservation policies vary by department.

Information on how and when to reserve space for meetings and promotional items can be found at the University Center's website at http://ucenter.tamu.edu/ under the "Reserve a Space" tab on the left-hand side of the screen. Additional resources for the Memorial Student Center are also available.

What’s an Organizational Event?

If you are unsure whether or not your activity qualifies as an "organizational event," ask yourselves the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the event? Does it relate to my student organization?
- Who will attend the event, and why?
- What resources are being used for the event? Is our organization providing any funding, marketing, etc. for the event?
- How is the event being publicized or communicated, both to the general public or campus community and to my organization's members?
- Would a reasonable person associate this event with my organization? Would the media associate the event with my organization?

If you have any reservations about these questions or have even a slight feeling that the event might qualify as an organizational event, it probably does. Err on the side of caution and plan for a safe event in compliance with the guidelines set forth for student organizations!

Make sure that you have reserved space, paid any fees (if applicable), and received final confirmation of the space reservation BEFORE you advertise for an event.

Many other facilities are available for Recognized Student Organizations to use on campus for meetings and/or events. Each space has its own system of reserving and space use limitations. Each department has separate reservations processes and policies, so check with them for more information. Make sure you are aware of all the policies regarding using these spaces on campus when you make your reservation.
**Risk Assessment**

The first step to successful event planning is a comprehensive assessment of the risk involved in the event or activity. Student organizations must consider risks in the following five categories:

- **Physical risks** involve harm or injuries to the physical body. Examples for student organization events might include injuries from physical activity, equipment or materials, food-related illnesses, alcohol consumption, dangerous travel conditions, medical emergencies, etc.

- **Reputation risks** apply to the reputation of the participants or attendees, individual officers and members present, the reputation of the student organization, and the reputation of the university as a whole. Examples of reputation risks might include poor conduct or behavior at an event, a negative representation of the group, or hazing of members.

- **Emotional risks** pertain to the thoughts and feelings of the organization’s members, participants or attendees, and any other constituents of the event or activity. Examples might include hazing of members, lack of accessibility to the event, discrimination against constituents, controversy or disruption of the campus, adverse reactions of participants, sensitive subject matter, and the strain of planning the event.

- **Financial risks** involve both the budget for the specific event and the overall financial health of the student organization. Examples might include a lack of cost reduction where possible, poor budgeting, failing to meet fundraising goals, etc.

- **Facilities risks** include both the safety of the facilities used for your members/participants and the maintenance of the facilities used by your members/participants. Examples might include a lack of proper set-up or clean-up for the event, inclement weather, safety and security issues at your location, a lack of familiarity with the facilities and location, or the disruption of university facilities.

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**Riverside Campus Reservations (Riverside Chapel)**

Recognized student organizations may reserve Riverside Chapel for organization use only, free of charge. A floor plan of this facility can be found here: [Riverside Chapel Floor plan](#). Chairs and Tables are available for use at the facility. Please contact (979) 862-2946 with any questions about using Riverside campus facilities and reservations.

To schedule use of the Riverside Campus Chapel, follow the directions below:

- Recognized Student Organizations as well as Officers reserving the venue for this event must be in good standing with the University.
- Check the Riverside Chapel Calendar for availability.
- Complete an Event Form on Maroon Link with information about your event and organization.
- Follow the Riverside Chapel online scheduling reservation system on the TAMU Office of Facilities website.
- Contact Bob Rudder at (979) 845-2281 or b-rudder@tamu.edu with questions regarding Riverside Campus gate access.

Note: Alcohol is not allowed at the Riverside Campus Chapel.
**Waivers/ Release Forms**

Waivers should be used for RSO travel, activities that have liability concerns (5Ks, car bashes, etc.), and any other events deemed necessary. To protect your organization, it is vital that participants are warned of the dangers inherent in your activities and that they sign a document stating they understand this danger and assume the responsibility for themselves. You should comprehensively discuss the risks present in your event or regular activities with your participants, to ensure that all members are participating willingly and knowingly.

Thus, utilizing the Student Activity Waiver and Release Form as a tool will communicate the risks to the participant associated with the activity. This form is a legal document and should be presented as such. It is a good idea to have everyone sign such a form at the time they join or pay dues and again before any event that carries with it some risk. In some cases, you may be required to have members sign waivers (when you travel away from the university, when you participate in physical activities, etc.).

**Negligence**

It is important to understand what things a court of law will look for in order to establish liability on the part of an individual or an organization. With this general knowledge, student organization leaders can create a framework by which they can attempt to proactively plan their events and problem-solve as the need arises. Generally, students and their organizations can be held liable by a court of law for two kinds of liability: "contract" and "tort". A contract is a binding agreement between two parties in which each gives something in return for something else. A tort is a civil wrong in which someone either intentionally or negligently causes harm to another person, and the most common kind of tort is negligence (breach of a duty owed to another person).

Members of student organizations may owe duties in many instances. For example, you may have a duty to train members about safety and their responsibilities during events. If you do so poorly and someone is injured as a result, that person may sue the organization for negligence. Another example could be harm done to a person as a result of the organization breaching its duty to follow state laws, such as hazing or serving alcohol to a minor. Sometimes, members assume personal liability as part of student organization events, such as driving other members to an organizational event in their own personal vehicles.

It is important to understand basic concepts of liability for your student organization and plan accordingly. The key is to exercise reasonable care to prevent any harm that might be foreseeable as a result of your activities or events. The more you do to keep your members and participants physically and mentally safe, the less likely you are to be found in a breach of your duty.
How to Design a Waiver/Release Form

The Department of Student Activities has a standard waiver that can be adapted for your organization's use by describing your activity in the Indemnity Clause. Some key points to consider in designing waiver and release forms for your organization and/or its activities are:

- Make sure the title of the document is clear, so everyone understands they are signing an assumption of risk form.
- Spaces for the organization's name, the participant's name, and the name of the specific event;
- Describe the activity as specifically as possible, using clear language and a comprehensive description of the risks involved.
- Include text asking the participant to "hold harmless and indemnify the sponsoring organization," to ensure that he/she has read and understood and risks involved and will not hold the organization liable in case of injury.
- Include text asking the participant to give consent for medical treatment in case of injury. In fact, the standard waiver form for student organizations asks for insurance information to provide a hospital in case of an emergency.
- A clear space for the participant to sign and date the form indicating his/her understanding and acknowledgment of the previous information.
- If the participant is a minor (under the age of 18), he/she must have a parent or guardian sign the form.
- Retain waiver forms for the specified amount of time following the event (normally the statute of limitations for any potential future litigation for student organizations will be 3 years).

In addition to signing the form, you should go over with participants the possible dangers they may encounter while engaging in the activity. Try to be as comprehensive as possible based on the normal dangers associated with the activity. Participants will now be aware of what is involved in the activity and then can choose to assume the responsibility of engaging in the activity for themselves.

Please note that in the state of Texas, waiver forms themselves do not ensure that an event organization is insulated from liability. Courts will use the "assumption of the risk" to determine whether or not a participant contributed negligence to his/her injury. Even if a participant has signed a waiver form, you still owe that person a duty to effectively train him/her for the activity, maintain your equipment, and supervise the activity properly to avoid potential injuries.

Finally, do not let a waiver form be your only mitigator for the physical risks associated with your events. Having someone sign a release form does not mean that you don't still owe him/her a duty to exercise all reasonable care in preventing injury!
Travel Procedures

For all in-state and out-of-state travel, the following procedures apply:

- Your organization must submit a Travel Information Form online, per the Student Travel Rule, no less than 48 hours prior to your event. This form will request information about the logistics of your travel plans and the names, UINs, and emergency contact information of all traveling participants. In the case of an emergency during your trip, staff members from UPD and the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) will serve as your on-campus liaisons for crisis management.

- Each traveling member must sign a waiver and release form that specifies the risks associated with the organization's trip. You can adapt the standard waiver form or develop your own form in consultation with your advisor and the Department of Student Activities.

- Students driving privately owned vehicles must have a valid Texas or other state driver's license and possess auto insurance coverage as mandated by the State of Texas. In addition, the vehicles must have a current state inspection and registration. In the event of an accident, it is the driver's insurance that may be used to pay for damages to the vehicle(s) involved in an accident and/or any injuries to a passenger or occupant of another vehicle. Drivers of personal vehicles, by choosing to drive, assume responsibility for the safety of those in their vehicle, not the organization or university.

- If your organization will be using rental vehicles, be sure to inquire with the company about insurance, gas, mileage, and other policies or requirements associated with your rental. Organizations are responsible for gas during the trip.

- If you are flying to your destination, your organization can use a Travel Card from SOFC to directly bill your SOFC account for your airfare. This can also be used to pay hotel fees directly from your account.

- These requirements are the minimum measures your organization should take to address the risks associated with travel. We also strongly suggest developing behavior expectations for participants and emergency response procedures.

- The SOFC also has resources for organizations needing funds specifically for travel expenses.

- If your organization is planning an event involving international travel, you must plan far in advance with both the Department of Student Activities and the Study Abroad Programs Office a minimum of 3-6 months prior to departure. Please note that undergraduates are not permitted to travel to foreign countries under a travel warning issued by the State Department (see http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html for a list of countries under travel warnings). Please submit an Event Form on Maroon Link for your event, and staff members from the Department of Student Activities will respond for relevant procedures and advice. The Study Abroad Programs Office will require an application for your organization's event as well, and can provide your organization with helpful resources for your specific country of travel. All regular components of the Student Travel Rule apply for an international trip.

The Student Travel Rule

The Student Travel Rule applies when your organization is traveling to an event or activity located 25 miles or more away from the university (Bryan/College Station) and that activity is sponsored by the university, funded by the university, undertaken using a university vehicle, or undertaken under the scope of the organization.
Travel Responsibility

The Texas A&M Standard Administrative Procedure for student travel places the responsibility for ensuring compliance with these provisions on the student organization sponsoring the trip, so it is imperative that you are familiar with and follow these safety procedures.

Please note that the requirements and suggestions listed in this policy are the minimum acceptable provisions, and we encourage you to create thorough plans for safety during travel events.

Safety Guidelines

Student organization events involving travel are complex and risky activities, so they necessitate thorough planning and proactive risk management. The Student Travel Rule lists a few safety requirements and guidelines:

- Drivers and passengers must act responsibly and use sound judgment when traveling;
- Drivers must obey all traffic laws and regulations, including posted speed limits;
- Drivers must not drive under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, nor transport or possess alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, unauthorized firearms, or other types of weapons;
- Drivers and passengers must wear seat belts at all times, and the number of occupants in the vehicle must not exceed the number of seat belts; and
- Drivers and passengers must avoid horseplay, racing, and other distracting or aggressive behavior.
Some additional safety suggestions and best practices include the following:

- Drivers should begin the trip well rested, rotate every two hours, and divide the trip into segments to allow stops for rest,
- Students should notify a designated contact person upon the group's departure and arrival,
- Students should avoid driving when weather conditions are hazardous, and be prepared to pause the trip should travel conditions (or fatigue) warrant,
- Drivers should plan their routes in advance, and carpool or caravan when possible,
- Students should carry at least one cellular telephone or other two-way communication device, a flashlight, and an approved fire extinguisher in each vehicle for emergency purposes,
- Students should establish reasonable departure and arrival times to and from the activity, avoiding driving between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m.,
- Each vehicle should have at least one extra approved driver, and the second driver or another passenger should ride in the front passenger seat to remain awake with the driver and maintain alertness, and
- Drivers should avoid taking medication prior to driving, especially if the label warns against operating a vehicle while under the influence of the medication.
- Drivers should never send phone calls or text messages, or use his/her phone in any way. Use of cellular telephone and GPS devices should be given to a navigator or other passenger. These actions can result in severe consequences of the driver, passenger, vehicle as well as others on the road.
- Some suggested items to bring on your trip for safety purposes include: First Aid Kit, GPS (if driving), flashlight, cell phones for each vehicle/group leader, credit cards for emergencies, map(s) of your route and destination location, two sets of waiver forms: one master set to stay with the advisor and one to travel with the students, and a list of emergency phone numbers for all participants, including numbers of at least the advisor, the University Police Department (979-845-2345), the Department of Student Activities, other participants, and emergency liaisons at the destination location.
Vehicle Rental Information

Texas A&M University no longer offers daily vehicle rentals. In an effort to assist students interested in renting vehicles for organizational travel, the Department of Student Activities works with the local Enterprise Rent-a-Car branches. To rent a vehicle, please contact the Office of Student Organization Development and Administration at (979) 458-4371 or soda@stuact.tamu.edu to discuss transportation needs. It is strongly recommended that organizations contact us at least 10 business days prior to travel.

Student Activities cannot guarantee that any/all of the vehicles requested will be available. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that organizations contact the Department of Student Activities a MINIMUM of 10 business days prior to the scheduled departure date. It is also recommended that organizations prepare alternate transportation options in case vehicles are not available.

Transportation

There are many options for transportation available to your group, including planes, trains, personal vehicles, commercial vehicles, rental vehicles, charter buses, boats or ferries, and more. Road trips are the most common form of student organization travel, and it is important that your drivers are completely prepared for the trip. Consider the selection and training process for drivers, qualifications required, and the personal liability and responsibility assumed. In choosing the best option for your trip, you should also consider whether or not you should purchase insurance for your organization's event. You may require that participants have auto insurance or provide information about their health insurance, purchase trip insurance through the Department of Student Activities, and/or purchase an insurance policy through your commercial carrier.

To rent vehicles through Enterprise, drivers of small vehicles, minivans, and large SUVs must be over 18 years of age or older. Drivers of large capacity vehicles must be 21 years of age or older. The majority of other rental car dealers require the renter to be 25 years or older, but some may rent to students ages 18-21. Student organizations may be able to bypass the age requirement because of their affiliation with the university; be sure to ask about these requirements.

Your advisor must review any contracts you sign with a rental company. You should carefully review the information provided about fuel costs, charges based on mileage, etc.

Your organization can charter a bus from any charter company. The Student Organization Development and Administration team can help with specific companies commonly used by student organizations. Please contact us at soda@stuact.tamu.edu.
Renting a Vehicle

Why Should Your Organization Rent Vehicles?

- Rented vehicles can mitigate the risks associated with travel
- Organizations receive excellent rental rates that include insurance coverage
- Reduce the number of vehicles and drivers on the road
- Student Activities offers Van Driver Training at no cost to student organizations in an effort to proactively prepare students who will assume the responsibility of driving
- Planning ahead is simply a good practice!
- Using rented vehicles prevents wear and tear on personal vehicles
- Be green - carpool!

Steps for Renting a Vehicle

1) Complete an Event Form on MaroonLink
2) Obtain a Vehicle Rental Form in person through the Student Organization Development and Administration team.
3) After meeting with a representative from the SODA team, SOFC will contact Enterprise to confirm the vehicle availability and make a reservation.
4) Submit the completed Vehicle Rental Form to SOFC so the payment can be processed.
5) Complete Van Driving Training if using a large commercial vehicle.
6) Organization picks up vehicle(s) from Enterprise.

Van Driver Training

University rules require that drivers of large capacity vehicles (commonly referred to as 10-15 passenger vans) complete training prior to operating the vehicle even if they are rented from a commercial company. In addition to this being a requirement, research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows there is a greater risk of rollover due to inexperienced drivers, improperly sized and/or inflated tires, and incorrectly loaded cargo and passengers that affect the center of gravity. The training offered through Student Activities educates drivers in each of these areas.

A minimum of two drivers per van is required to take the training. This training is valid for one year. Because the training can take 20-30 minutes, please schedule time with our office to complete the training. To schedule a Van Driver Training contact the Student Organization Development and Administration (SODA) team in the Department of Student Activities at (979) 458-4371 or soda@stuact.tamu.edu.
Planning Your Organization’s Trip

The first step of planning a successful travel event for your organization is ensuring that the trip is in line with your group's mission, vision, and values. How does this trip match with your goals and objectives for the group? What are you hoping to achieve? Next, begin thinking about the logistical planning necessary for the trip. Do your members have the capability to plan this trip? Consider all of the risks associated with the trip, and make comprehensive plans about how to reduce or eliminate those areas of risk. Discuss the trip with your advisor, and submit an Event Form on MaroonLink.

Student organizations sometimes struggle in defining whether or not a trip with members from the group qualifies as an "organizational event." Some factors to consider that will help you make the distinction between a trip with friends or an organizational event include:

- Who is coordinating the trip and on whose behalf?
- How was information about the trip communicated to your members?
- Who will be attending?
- Is the trip in line with your organization's purpose, and has it been approved through your organization's standard decision-making process?
- Have you discussed the trip with your advisor?
- How would an objective person define your trip?

Safety Precautions

Begin by establishing expectations for all participants traveling with your organization. Great ways to ensure that your participants understand their expectations and guidelines include hosting an orientation meeting before the trip and distributing written copies of the expectations. You should include the information required by the Student Travel Rule (waiver forms and Travel Information Form), behavior expectations, and procedures for emergency situations. If you are traveling by personal vehicles, commercial vehicles, or university vans, you must communicate and enforce the safe driving practices outlined by the Student Travel Rule.
Emergency Situations on Trips

It is imperative to plan ahead of time for your response in case of an emergency. The waiver forms and Travel Information Form required by the Student Travel Rule are mandatory to help protect student organizations in case something goes wrong on your trip, but you must also establish your own specific emergency procedures to help guide your reaction in a crisis situation. Your advisor and the Department of Student Activities are available to help you plan the most effective emergency response plans.

If a breakdown occurs, you can call the Department of Public Safety non-emergency roadside assistance phone number: (800) 525-5555.

If you are involved in an accident:
- Stop immediately and notify local police or call 911;
- Contact your advisor;
- Assess the situation and provide any appropriate aid;
- Fill out a police report for insurance purposes;
- Obtain the names and contact information of all witnesses; and
- Avoid making statements about who is at fault for the accident or offering to pay damages. (Fault and/or legal liability will be decided by the appropriate authorities.)
- Also, if you are driving a university or commercial vehicle, consult with the procedures outlined in your rental information.

If someone is injured on your trip:
- Call 911 immediately to obtain medical attention for the participant;
- Render aid as appropriate;
- Consult the waiver or medical release form to determine if the participant has special needs and/or health insurance information;
- Contact the University Police Department at (979) 845-2345 to notify the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT); and
- Contact your advisor.
Resources and Safety Considerations for International Travel

Some important safety considerations for international travel include the following:

- **Ensure that you have all your necessary documentation.** Participants will need signed, valid passports, and it is recommended that each person make two (2) copies of his/her passport - one to leave at home and one to bring on the trip. Should someone's passport become lost or stolen, having copies will facilitate a much easier replacement process.

- **Read as much as you can about your travel destination.** You should at least consult with the local laws and applicable public announcements or travel warnings/conditions for the country you are visiting. Find information about the currency exchange rates and any shopping restrictions. We also recommend that you familiarize your participants with the customs and norms of your destination.

- **Establish your emergency procedures.** Ensure that each participant leaves itinerary information with family members or friends at home, so that they can be contacted in case of an emergency. Provide each participant with emergency contact information that s/he can use at your destination, such as the phone numbers and addresses of your trip coordinators, country liaisons, and the closest United States embassy.

- **Exercise caution and common sense during your trip.** Attend to your luggage and belongings, especially during travel. Help your participants avoid being targets of crime by dressing inconspicuously and leaving any expensive belongings at home or in their hotel rooms.

- **Take care with the food and beverages you consume while abroad.** It is important to eat regularly and ensure you are obtaining your necessary vitamins to maintain good health while in a foreign country. Try to avoid uncooked meat and raw vegetables that have not been peeled. Be especially careful with drinking water, even the tap water you use in your bathroom.

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**CISI - Medical Insurance & Emergency Services**

CISI insurance and emergency medical services are available to students participating in any type of international education experience, as well as all faculty who engage in educational activities overseas. The insurance premium is built into the Field Trip Fee paid to the Study Abroad Programs Office. This provides you and your trip participants with medical insurance and emergency services if treatment is needed while abroad.

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**Spring Break Trips**

We want organizations to have a well-planned, safe Spring Break trip.

The State Department has some great strategies for avoiding dangerous incidents: [http://studentsabroad.state.gov/springbreak.php](http://studentsabroad.state.gov/springbreak.php).