



Risk Management Program

*We can take the very best precautions
but we cannot stop lightning from striking.*

Stokes Nature Center's mission is to provide nature education, promote outdoor exploration, and foster appreciation and stewardship of our natural world for people of all ages. In this process, our organization, staff, and customers will be exposed to some risk. Wherever possible, SNC strives to reduce the risks we face through careful planning, trained staff and following industry standards. SNC and our customers accept that some inherent risk in our activities is unavoidable, and is even necessary in order to fulfill our mission.

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Risk Management Program



INDUSTRY STANDARD = general accepted policy and practice
 STATE & FEDERAL LAW = required, often bare minimum for industry
 POLICY = Internal rules to the organization
 PROCEDURES = how a practice/policy is implemented
 GUIDELINE = a standard practice

I - INTRODUCTION TO THE RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Risk management is a continual application of practices therefore we have chosen to call this a “program” rather than the more static “plan”. The program purpose is to identify and acknowledge the risks associated with Stokes Nature Center’s operations and layout practices that minimize unnecessary risk or incidents. This program provides guidance and oversight for all Stokes Nature Center (SNC) branches and operational areas.

Risk cannot be completely removed from any activity or business. By following best practices, industry standards, safety audits and state/federal laws SNC aims to make its operations as safe as is reasonably possible. This does not remove all risk and Stokes Nature Center acknowledges that risks inherent to some of our activities still exist and as required policy we ask our participants and employees to acknowledge these inherent risks exist as well.

GOALS OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- Identify the known risks throughout the organization
- Outline Stokes Nature Center’s practices for:
 - Hiring, training and supporting qualified staff
 - Purchasing and maintaining the necessary equipment for our operations.
 - Writing and updating clear policies and guidelines for our operation.
- Acknowledge that risk exists within our operation and it cannot be avoided.
- Acknowledge that the element of risk is a necessary part of the education process.
- Outline Stokes Nature Center’s practices for responding to an emergency or incident.
- Use the Risk Management Committee to draw lessons from past incidents and revise this program annually.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

1. Reduce the number of incidents and injuries within our organization
2. Hold and document consistent staff training
3. Follow all federal and state laws and appropriate industry standard practices.
4. Provide high quality and efficient service to our participants and customers and provide the safety that is reasonably expected within the industry.

TERMINOLOGY

Within risk management there are areas of flexibility and of mandatory rules. To clarify SNC’s Risk Management Program, the following terminology is provided:

- i. **GUIDELINES** - These are Stokes Nature Center’s recommended action steps that are the most likely approach used in a situation, yet can be altered by staff when a safer or more prudent action step is available. Stokes Nature Center guidelines are based on the principle that variables will exist that could make a commonly used practice un-necessarily dangerous.
- ii. **POLICIES** - These are strict rules established by Stokes Nature Center that are to be followed in all situations. These policies are integral to legal and fiduciary protections of Stokes Nature Center and many are requirements of governmental authorities.

iii. **LAWS & REGULATIONS** - These are firm rules established by a governing authority (state, federal or agency).

Note: SNC has incorporated any pertinent laws and regulations into the policies and guidelines within our risk management plan.

iv. **INDUSTRY STANDARDS** – These are the actions or practices used by most organizations operating in a similar industry. These ‘standards’ are practices that a customer or participant will reasonably expect the organization to utilize. In many examples, ‘standards’ have become recognized in the industry following successful legal claims against an organization. Recognized ‘industry standards’ may not be required by a governing authority or agency partner yet Stokes Nature Center may choose to institute these practices in order to satisfy public expectation and to reduce legal risk. Industry standards are shared through networks such as the Wilderness Risk Management Conference and evaluated for Stokes Nature Center implementation on an annual basis. Examples of industry standards include:

- Driving history background checks on staff
- Emergency medicine training that is appropriate to the work environment and participant audience
- First aid kits and AED’s appropriate for a particular environment
- Criminal background checks for staff that work with youth
- Allergen and Anaphylaxis training for staff in remote settings

Note: On a regular basis SNC incorporates pertinent Industry Standards into our risk management plan.