

This Emergency Response Plan is provided as a template for recreational camps. Each camp must review and tailor this document to reflect its specific location, facilities, staffing structure, camper needs, and operational activities. Camps should ensure that designated shelter areas, communication procedures, and emergency contacts are site-specific and up to date before implementation.

Emergency Response Plan – Missing Camper

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a rapid, coordinated, and safe response when a camper is unaccounted for. Early identification and organized search efforts help reduce risk and support the safe return of the camper while ensuring the supervision and safety of all other campers.

Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers responsible for camper supervision during camp operations. It applies during all camp activities, including indoor programming, outdoor activities, waterfront programming, field trips, overnight supervision and transitions between activities.

A missing camper is defined as a camper whose whereabouts cannot be immediately confirmed during supervision, attendance checks, or transitions between activities.

Actions

If a camper is unaccounted for, staff should take the following steps immediately.

Confirm and contain:

Stop the group and conduct an immediate headcount. Confirm the camper's name, description, and last known location. Identify the point last seen if known. Ensure all remaining campers are supervised and contained in a safe location.

Overnight or cabin checks

If the camper is discovered missing during overnight supervision or cabin checks, staff should immediately check all cabins, washrooms, and nearby areas. Camp leadership should be notified immediately. If the camper cannot be located quickly or may have left the cabin area, the emergency response procedure and search should begin.

Initial search:

Staff should conduct a rapid search of nearby areas where the camper may reasonably be located. This includes washrooms, buildings, activity areas, nearby trails, and common gathering locations. Staff should check the point last

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Organized search:

If the camper is not located during the initial search, the camp should begin a more structured search of the site. Staff should search buildings, activity spaces, wooded areas, shoreline areas, vehicles, and site boundaries. Areas should be searched systematically and search efforts should be documented to avoid duplication.

Emergency services:

Emergency services should be contacted if the camper is not located quickly, if the camper may be near water or another high-risk environment, or if there are concerns related to the camper's health, age, or vulnerability.

When the camper is found:

Once the camper is located, staff should assess the camper's condition and provide first aid if needed. Emergency services and parents or guardians should be notified as appropriate. Staff should document where and when the camper was located and any relevant circumstances.

Communications

Clear and controlled communication is important during a missing camper incident.

Staff should communicate essential information only and avoid creating panic among campers. All campers should remain supervised at all times.

Emergency services should be contacted when appropriate and provided with accurate information, including the camper's description, last known location, and areas already searched.

Parents or guardians should be notified by camp leadership if the situation escalates or once the camper has been located.

Any communication with media should follow the organization's established communication policies.

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Recommendations

Camps are encouraged to implement the following measures to reduce the risk of missing camper incidents:

- Maintain regular headcounts during activities and transitions
- Ensure clear supervision ratios and defined camper groups
- Establish clear camp boundaries and communicate them to campers
- Ensure staff know the layout of the camp and high-risk areas such as water, roads, and wooded areas
- Ensure staff know how to contact emergency services and camp leadership quickly
- Conduct staff training on missing camper procedures before camp operations begin
- Document incidents and conduct a review following any missing camper event to identify improvements