

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Safety First

We want our youth ministry programmes to be safe – not only for our youth, but also for those who volunteer and work with them. This means that as youth ministers we need to be aware of risks and have strategies in place to deal with them.

A Risk Assessment and Management Strategy (RAMS) Form is a great way to do this.

It's a form that the event co-ordinator prior to an activity or event. It is your 'in case of emergency plan' – it helps to identify potential risks and establish strategies to minimise them.

These forms should be filled in for:

- Outdoor activities
- Camps
- Youth group activities where there is an element of risk (e.g.)
- A "typical" youth event – to have on file

How to fill in a RAMS form

Risk: These are the end result of any mishap, e.g. physical injury (minor/moderate/major), emotional stress. *Ask: What is the worst thing that could happen during this activity?*

Causal Factors: These are listed under three categories: people, equipment, environment. *Ask: What factors could cause these incidents?*

Risk Management – Normal Operations: Establish strategies to deal with each of these specific causes. *Ask: What can reasonably be done to stop these incidents from happening?*

Risk Management - Emergency: Establish a plan to deal with incidents if they do happen. *Ask: What can I put in place now so that I could deal with an emergency effectively?*

While filling in the form, be realistic but cover your bases. Think of all possibilities.

Right, done. Now what?

Keep the form in your files in case you need to refer to it at a later date. During the event, be aware of the factors you've listed – you've got the plan, so follow it! And finally, remember that no matter how much you prepare for an event/activity you cannot eliminate every single risk. Accidents do happen from time to time, and risk taking is also an important part of growing up. The aim is to manage the risk and eliminate the dangers that can be avoided, modelling this approach for the young people you are working with.