

## RT & RM Training Module Script

Howdy! And welcome to the Road Trips and Risk Management training module. This module will focus on risk management practices as they apply to student organizations traveling away from the Bryan/College Station area.

This module will cover: what qualifies as a road trip, what is required from your organization, the role of the pre-event planning form, an overview of the five types of risks, the contribution of the event to your organization's mission, thinking outside of the box, documentation, and ultimately provide you with further resources to aid in the planning of a road trip.

As a recognized student organization it is important for you to first identify what qualifies as a road trip. A road trip, as defined by the Texas A&M Student Rules, involves any intended travel to an activity or event located 25 miles or more away from the university. Students and organization that go on road trips must abide by the student travel rule which outlines several requirements and procedures.

Having access to current information is an essential factor in the University's ability to effectively respond to a critical incident involving Texas A&M students. In an effort to ensure individuals responsible for providing assistance during a critical incident have the information needed, student organizations are responsible for completing the following steps prior to travel:

First, organizations need to complete and submit a Travel Information Form at least 48 hours before the organizations departs. Information submitted on this form includes the names, UIN's, and emergency contact information of all participants traveling with your organization. The form also asks for advisor contact information, as well as a group emergency contact's information. This information will be used by the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) and other University staff members to assist student participants in case of an emergency. So, it is imperative that we have a correct and up-to-date list of your participants and your travel plans.

Second, organizations need to have each traveling participant sign an Assumption of Risk waiver form acknowledging they understand and accept the risks associated with the travel activity. Use of the standard waiver form provided by Student Activities is strongly recommended. Please be sure to modify the form for your event by adding information about your specific activities in the Indemnity Clause section. Also, please note that the release form will need to be signed by the parent or legal guardian of any participants traveling that are under the age of eighteen.

Lastly, The Student Travel Rule lists a few safety requirements and guidelines for drivers and passengers during road trips:

- 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. It is also important to be aware that some allergy and pain medications should not be taken before driving;
- 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; ;
- Drivers and passengers must avoid horseplay, racing, and other distracting or aggressive behavior. And,
- 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, or vehicle, as well as others on the road.

In addition to those requirements and guidelines, some additional safety suggestions and best practices for road trips 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. When utilizing a large caravan it is helpful to depart in groups of cars no larger than 4
- 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.

Beyond the requirements and guidelines per the student travel rule, Student Activities highly encourages the use of a pre-event planning form when traveling in order for your organization to practice proactive risk management. The goal of proactive risk management is to prevent a significant event and to encourage the fulfillment of the organization's mission, purpose and goals. With that goal in mind, the submission of a well thought out pre-event planning form to Student Activities through your advisor's approval at least 10 business days prior to your trip

will allow for a trained representative from Student Activities to assess your travel plans helping you to identify and mitigate any potential risks.

For more information on pre-event planning forms please watch the “Knowing what to do with your PEP: Pre-Event Planning Form” Training Module.

When assessing and identifying potential risks present in any road trip there are five areas of risk that must be considered. We refer to these five areas as PREFF, an acronym that represents physical, reputational, emotional, financial, and facilities risks.

- **Physical** risks involve harm or injuries to the physical body. Examples of potential physical risks associated with travel and road trips might include drowsy driving, a car wreck, or dangerous travel conditions such as inclement weather.
- **Reputation** risks apply to the reputation of the individual officers and members present, the reputation of the student organization, and the reputation of the university as a whole. Examples of potential reputation risks associated with road trips might include poor conduct or behavior or a negative representation of the group while on the road or at the destination.
- **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 of potential emotional risks associated with road trips might include lack of accessibility to a vehicle or exclusion of members who can attend.
- **Financial** risks involve both the budget for the specific event and the overall financial health of the student organization. Examples of potential financial risks associated with road trips might include costs for gas, vehicle rentals, or lodging.
- **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 of facilities risks associated with road trips might include lack of proper maintenance of a vehicle, misuse or mistreatment of a vehicle, or misuse of the destination or lodging facilities.

All five of these areas of PREFF need to be considered whenever assessing and identifying potential risks that could be encountered on a road trip and strategies should be created for how your organization plans to mitigate any perceived risks.

Aside from risk assessment and mitigation, the other main goal of pro-active risk management is to ensure the fulfillment of your organization's mission, purpose, and goals. The consideration of how a road trip contributes to your organization's mission and helps to achieve your goals is vital. Whenever considering planning a road trip, it is important to ask yourself and your staff, “How does traveling to X location help us achieve our goals for this event and uphold the mission and purpose of our organization?” This should not be a difficult question to answer, and if you find that a strong answer is hard to come by, there may be other events to pursue which better align with your organization's mission and goals.

The case may often arise where your organization's trip may not contribute well to your organization's mission. There may also be cases where other overlying risks or issues are present, such as the cost of the trip not being justifiable for members, or the inability to accept, modify, transfer, or eliminate risks associated with travel. When these situations present themselves, an opportunity also presents itself: an opportunity to get creative! Ask yourself and your staff: "Is there another way to equally and effectively benefit your organization and contribute to your mission without traveling?"

As an example, a lot of road trips are taken for the purpose of fellowship and bonding among membership, but does fellowship and bonding only take place 25 miles or more outside of the University? No, there are a number of locations and facilities in the Bryan/College Station area that are great destinations for just that.

That is just one example. But, encourage your staff and your members to think outside of the box. Think about ways that you can stay in town and still achieve the goals you have set for a road trip. That consideration can save you money and save you from a great deal of risk.

Documentation is an important part of every type of event planning process, but it is especially vital for road trips. Documenting everything done in the planning of a road trip provides useful information throughout a trip. Everything required and suggested for road trips, including the travel information form, assumption of risk waiver, and pre-event planning form, should always be completed with as much detail as possible. It is also a good practice for the person in charge and main contact for the road trip to have copies of all of these items with them throughout the trip so that they are prepared for any incident that could occur.

In addition to those forms, it is also a good practice to create and document a communication plan and emergency response plan for the road trip. A documented communication plan should be created taking into consideration communication between vehicles and communication with the advisor, whether present or not. This communication plan should be made known and available to all participants of the road trip. A documented emergency response plan should also be created so that every participant of the trip knows what their role is and how to respond in the event of an accident. This emergency response plan should also be made known and available to all participants as well as the organization's advisor. The organization's budget for the trip should also be well-documented and brought on the trip so that all expenditures are planned out in advance and your organization is able to adhere to that budget throughout the trip.

Before planning and embarking upon any road trip as a student organization, you should familiarize yourself with the Texas A&M Student Travel Rule making sure you know what is required of your organization. It is also important to thoroughly examine all the potential risks that inherently lie in travel. Remember to consider how the trip contributes your organization's mission, purpose, and goals and document everything you can.

We hope that this training has successfully prepared you to plan a purposeful, safe road trip. Here are some additional resources available to you regarding road trips. And, remember, we are here and always willing to help you.

Thanks & Gig 'Em!

[END]