



Best News Website or Mobile Service Digital Media Awards Worldwide 2022

- Top Stories
- Latest News
- Discover
- Singapore
- Asia
- Commentary
- Sustainability
- CNA Insider
- Lifestyle
- Watch
- Listen

ADVERTISEMENT



THE DIGITAL BANK FOR THE EVERYDAY US

Sign up now

Singapore

After outdoor mishaps with schoolkids, instructors now required to go through detailed checklists

Some parents remain worried but acknowledge it would be impossible - and detrimental - to "bubble-wrap" and protect their children forever.



MOE formalised the pre-use checklists after height-based activities for school programmes resumed in February 2023 to help instructors "systemically" check challenge course equipment and facilities. (Photo: Facebook/Blackbox OE) ...see more

Listen to this article



6 min

This audio is generated by an AI tool.



Natasha Ganesan

14 Mar 2024 06:00AM



SINGAPORE: Outdoor instructors conducting height-based activities in schools are required to fill up comprehensive checklists - a measure made official in the aftermath of serious safety incidents involving students.

Known as the pre-use checklist, the document looks at the condition of personal protective equipment (PPE) like harnesses and helmets as well as going over the high elements involved during the activities.

ADVERTISEMENT



Best News Website or Mobile Service Digital Media Awards Worldwide 2022

[Top Stories](#) [Latest News](#) [Discover](#) [Singapore](#) [Asia](#) [Commentary](#) [Sustainability](#) [CNA Insider](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Watch](#) [Listen](#)

A month earlier, a volunteer instructor was given [six months' jail](#) over the death of a 15-year-old student in a high-element obstacle course.

In response to CNA's queries, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said it formalised the pre-use checklists in February 2023, when height-based activities for school programmes resumed after a two-year pause due to the 15-year-old's death.

The checklists will help instructors "systemically" check challenge course equipment and facilities prior to conducting activities at MOE's Outdoor Adventure Learning Centres and schools with challenge course facilities.

ADVERTISEMENT

And the practice is aligned to standards set by the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), an international trade association and standards developer.

Before the two incidents, there was no required checklist, although it was "best practice" in the industry to conduct checks before carrying out any activity, said secretary-general of the Outdoor Learning & Adventure Education Association (OLAE) Delane Lim.

He added that it was essential for instructors to not merely go through the checks "without genuine engagement".

Freelance instructor Michael Lim also noted that the checklists have become more comprehensive.

"After the incidents, everything has been stepped up. We ... easily take another hour more just to check the equipment, go through the paperwork, going through the list to make sure that every single thing is checked for," said the 46-year-old, who has been an instructor for about 30 years.

ADVERTISEMENT

Managing director and co-founder of Blackbox Outdoor Education Lye Yen Kai said MOE's requirements have been tighter since the incidents.

Under enhanced safety measures announced by the ministry in November 2022, all operators offering height-based activities for MOE students must ensure their facilities are accredited regularly by a National Sports Association or a regional outdoor adventure learning professional body

Schools must only engage accredited operators and qualified instructors such as those with ACCT certifications.

"Since the accidents, MOE has really been pushing the bar higher," said Mr Lye, whose company trains outdoor educators.

"We can also understand as an industry because it's children. The school has a duty of care, we have a duty of care."

ADVERTISEMENT

Related:

[Singapore student's rope course death raises questions over volunteer instructors in outdoor education sector](#)



PARENTS "NATURALLY" WORRIED

Parents CNA spoke to expressed concern about their children participating in height-based activities, especially after the two cases.

"There will naturally be some worries and anxieties if our child will be experiencing higher-risk activities that are designed to stretch them, whether mentally or physically, especially if it is happening in the immediate aftermath of hearing such news," said Ms June Yong, a mother of three, who works as a family life educator at non-profit organisation Focus on the Family Singapore.

Another parent, Ms Karen Chen, said there was a need to care for each individual child's safety and "not just look at them as a mass".

The 43-year-old mother of three told CNA her eldest child, who is in Secondary 3, has an Outward Bound Singapore (OBS) camp coming up in July.

She does not plan to check with the school if the camp includes height-based activities, as she trusts the teachers and the vendors they are working with.

"If it's something dangerous and (unsafe), I don't think they will even proceed in the first place. But of course, I do hope that everybody is practicing good safety habits," Ms Chen added.

Ms Susan Koh's Secondary 3 daughter attended an OBS camp in the first week of February, which included some height-based activities such as abseiling, rock-climbing and a high-element course.

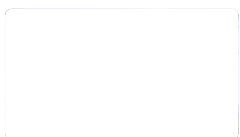
The 44-year-old told CNA there was an information session for parents prior to the camp, which mentioned some of the activities as well as the safety procedures in place.

"I felt assured that OBS have stepped up on their safety protocols and (that) the safety of my child was a priority," said Ms Koh.

Related:



Outdoor adventure education sites to be consolidated from 8 to 4; public golf course to make way



National standard for safety of outdoor adventure programmes | Video

CAN'T "BUBBLE-WRAP" CHILDREN

Both Ms Chen and Ms Koh noted that students can opt out of the entire OBS experience if they wish too, as the programme is not compulsory.

Still, students are strongly encouraged to participate in all activities unless they have valid reasons.

In response to CNA's queries, MOE added that students may choose to participate in the activities based on their readiness and comfort level.

Ms Koh's daughter was initially apprehensive about the high-element course as she has a fear of heights.

"However, having seen her friends go through it one by one, she mustered her courage to conquer her fears and completed the activity," she said.

She also reminded her daughter about the fatal incident involving the student and told her to pay close attention to the safety briefing, as well as to double check her safety equipment.



Best News Website or Mobile Service Digital Media Awards Worldwide 2022

- Top Stories
- Latest News
- Discover
- Singapore
- Asia
- Commentary
- Sustainability
- CNA Insider
- Lifestyle
- Watch
- Listen

learning programmes and experiences," said Ms Yong.

"Our children learn and grow through such age-appropriate challenges and situations. We learn not only about our instincts and fears, but also about our capacity to rise to the occasion and be courageous instead of avoiding things solely out of fear or discomfort."

Ms Chen said: "These are elements that will build up their confidence level in a different way ... (which) we don't learn in the classroom."

Source: CNA/ng(jo)

Related Topics

- outdoor activities
- MOE

ADVERTISEMENT

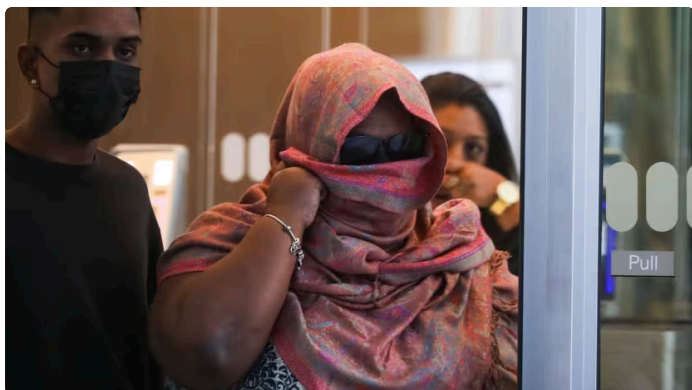
Also worth reading



'You seem to behave like a gangster': Judge chides rioting teen who opened bank accounts for scammers



Singaporean actor Aliff Aziz's wife files for divorce after his close proximity scandal



'A heartrending case': 12 years' jail for woman who cheated boss into giving her S\$3.7 million



'I'm very hot-tempered': Woman jailed for swinging knife at husband in front of children

Recommended by