



AECO POLAR FIELD STAFF STANDARDS

AECO Polar Field Staff Standards ver. 1.1b

Updated October 2021

Standardized field staff standards are necessary for the expedition cruise industry in order to uphold best practice. The AECO Field Staff Standards reflect a responsible industry with an interest in working for improved safety throughout the Arctic Region.

For each area there is a recommended list of skills and competencies required to live up to the standard along with suggestions to relevant certifications and qualifications. Certifications listed here are not excluding other types of equivalent certifications which, as a minimum, encompasses the list of skills and competencies to attain. Combined this constitutes *the AECO Field Staff Standards*.

The AECO Field Staff Standards are minimum standards. Equivalent or internal training must meet or exceed the skills and competencies and/or recommended certifications outlined in this document.

This version of AECO Field Staff Standards can be adjusted or added to depending on developments in the industry and if agreed upon by the membership of AECO. These standards are currently not mandatory but in a phase of evaluation based on membership experiences.

Members are furthermore encouraged to document the content of internal training and keep a record of relevant experience and education of employed field staff.

AECO will continue to work with IAATO with an aim to make Field Staff Standards a joint effort.

AECO Field staff
standards Layout: AECO
Cover photo: Annie Sprat



FIRST AID

Skills and competencies required:

- Basic ABCD (Airway, Breathing, CPR, De-fibrillation)
CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)
AED (automated external defibrillator)
- Response to drowning
- Anaphylaxis
- Hypoglycemia
- Stroke/heart attack
- Wound care
- Fractures, sprains, and strains
- Prevention of hypothermia
- Shock training
- Sun damage (incl. eyes)

Suggested certification
and qualifications:

Basic First Aid course and in house (or similar)
training to accommodate polar particulars such
as hypothermia.

Staff intended to comply: All field staff

SAFETY & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Skills and competencies required:

- Ability to perform risk assessment (situational awareness and hazard mitigation in a polar environment)
- Know how and where to access decision making tools such as weather forecasts, ice charts, tide tables, project tides: heights, ranges etc.
- Techniques for effective crowd management
- Understanding roles within a crisis management team
- Techniques to secure and monitor incident location/ accident site
- Use of emergency equipment carried on land/emergency shelter
- Ability to re-assess situation and ongoing next steps
- Debriefing techniques for evaluating crises/incidents

Suggested certification and qualifications:

Crowd & Crisis Management (online), equivalent internal and/or external training (i.e., theoretical and practical)

Staff intended to comply:

All field staff



ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Skills and competencies required - Radio:

- Basic radio protocol, etiquette and safety
- Use of control features (High/low power, squelch, lock and unlock, changing channels etc.)
- Radio care
- Understand limitations depending on environment and geographical location
- The theory behind marine radio technology (difference between marine channels)
- The use of repeaters (if appropriate to organization)
- Phonetic alphabet

Skills and competencies required - Satellite phone:

- Basic use of satellite handheld phone - function, storage, care, recharging
- Ensure list of numbers is included relevant to the operational area

Recommended certification and qualifications:

Recognized operator's license (Royal Yacht Association (RYA) Radio course, Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate (ROC), Canada, or equivalent).

Satellite phone - in house, logged

Staff intended to comply: Radio: All field staff carrying a radio
Satellite phone: All field staff



NAVIGATION INCL. GPS

Skills and competencies required - GPS:

- Demonstrate understanding of the technical use and function of the device (GPS, Compass)
- Understand system of coordinates (decimal degrees, degrees, minutes, seconds, etc.)
- Understanding of situations in which device can be used
 - Ability to navigate in low visibility with GPS device
 - Ability to lay tracks & mark waypoints
 - Ability to communicate location or find location using latitude and longitude
- Demonstrate understanding and use of nautical charts, topographical maps (charts projection, chart datums, symbols and abbreviations, etc.)
- Understand the function of mud maps

Skills and competencies required - Compass:

- Understand points
- Understand true/magnetic and apply declination
- Steer/walk a compass course
- Understand 'pacing' to estimate distance traveled (including timing)
- Able to read a map/chart and orientate compass to map/chart if required

Recommended certification and qualifications:

Logged experience and ship/company-specific related training

Recognized existing qualifications already in place can be accepted (such as but not limited to International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IMFGA), Mountain Leader (ML), Summer Mountain Leader, PTGA)

Staff intended to comply: All field staff on shore or driving small boats

OPERATION OF SMALL BOATS

Skills and competencies required:

- Demonstrate pre-driving boat and equipment checks
- Understanding basic troubleshooting with vessel and engine
- Be able to maneuver vessel in limited space (e.g. approaching gangway, marina deck, and land)
- Knowledge of what actions/precautions to take when weather/visibility deteriorates (use of radar reflector, GPS receiver)
- Understanding tides, weather, wind, current, local conditions
- Understanding of company protocols such as buddy system, etc.
- Ability to tow (incl. accepting, securing towline & towing at a safe speed) and understand the general principles of being towed
- Knowledge of how to anchor
- Shallow water driving / approaching shoreline
- Man overboard (MOB) recovery
- Assessment of ice conditions/movement/risk
- Appropriate use of kill cord
- Launch and recovery
- Wildlife awareness
- Knowledge of local regulations and AECO/IAATO guidelines

Recommended
certification and
qualifications:

Powerboat certification such as RYA II, Small Vessel Operator Proficiency (SVOP), or equivalent and in-house training according to “list of skills and competencies” and driving ability assessments (logged).

Staff intended to comply: All field staff/crew driving small boats

FIREARMS

Skills and competencies required:

- Safe handling incl. muzzle control
- Safe transport and storage
- Load/unload/half load of firearms
- Principles of marksmanship
- Training on larger caliber relevant to areas of operation
- Behavioral aspects of bear encounters- stress/panic/freeze etc.
- Safe handling of ammunition



FIREARMS - CONTINUED

Recommended certification and qualifications:

License to acquire/carry/possess a firearm is advised but not an absolute requirement where a practical internal or external training course that includes the listed competencies will be sufficient (for example Canadian Firearms Safety Course (CFSC) + PAL, Canada. National Rifle Association (NRA),US.

Any training must be fully auditable and include training reports. Some jurisdictions have very stringent laws regarding firearms, where this is the case the mentioned training would suffice.

Experienced staff- Internal/external refresher training and verification of skills.

Note to operators:

License does not replace experience and in recognition of this, operators are encouraged to supplement experience with licensing.

Third party person for verification/training. Designated firearms manager in-house to ensure standards met.

Recommended for firearm carriers to practice/train with the rifle model they will be carrying.

Recommend pre-season (pre-trip) meeting of rifle handlers and bear monitors to sort responsibilities and chain of command.

Staff intended to comply: All field staff handling firearms



POLAR BEAR SAFETY

Skills and competencies required:

- Basic bear biology
- Bear behavior and analysis (specific to region)
- Understanding potential for different types on conflict
- Landing site management and risk assessment (from bear safety point of view)
- Landing site knowledge - safe and unsafe zones, extrication (evac routes), observational skills, situational awareness
- Passenger / Group management in polar bear setting
- Crisis communication skills
- Company contingency plans for site evacuation
- Understanding/comply with regional legislation and laws for operating in polar bear habitat
- Commitment to minimal impact/harm (intention is zero impact)

Recommended certification and qualifications:

In house or external training according to "skills and competencies required"

To be considered:

Commercial Bear Viewing Association of British Columbia (CBVA - <http://www.bearviewing.ca>), PTGA - "Operations in Polar Bear Environments" OR equivalent.

Recommendation:

Engage in dialogue with CBVA to be able to use training material (footage, etc.) for development and/or investigate what training options they offer (if online/affordable a recognized scheme could possibly be made standard).

Staff intended to comply:

All field staff on shore in the Arctic

ONBOARD SHIPS SAFETY

Recommended
certification and
qualifications:

Operators to comply with relevant flag state
requirements and associated practices.

Include staff in onboard crisis management training.

Staff intended to comply:

All marine based field staff

