

# THE Family ADVENTURE COMPANY

FIRST FOR ADVENTURE

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Dr Andrew Harris  
Coroner for the Inner South District of Greater London  
Southwark Coroner' Court  
1 Tennis Street  
Southwark  
LONDON  
SE1 1YD

14<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Dear Dr Harris

## **Inquest touching the death of Rachel Ann Burke**

We write in response to the Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths touching on the death of Rachel Ann Burke. In section 6 relating to action that should be taken the report detailed two areas for The Adventure Company to address regarding the itineraries and information provided to passenger and the knowledge of trek leaders in reference to travellers' health insurance and the accessing of medical services.

Regarding the rate of ascent and altitude gains between sleeping altitudes The Adventure Company has reviewed the expert guidance provided. The Wilderness Medical Society consensus guidelines provide a suggested approach to AMS/HACE/HAPE prevention. These guidelines state that above 3000m people should not exceed 500m gain in elevation between sleeping elevation and to include acclimatisation days where there is no gain between nightstops every 3 or 4 days. We have reviewed all our Nepal high altitude treks against the Wilderness Medical Society guidelines. Whilst trips had been designed and running with safe ascent levels in mind we were able to identify a couple of adjustments to reduce some of the daily altitude increases. The changes identified have been implemented on the ground for the end of the current trekking season and will form part of our published itineraries for the start of the new trekking season in September.

In some circumstances the local infrastructure available for commercial group trekking means that it is necessary to exceed the 500m a day guideline provided by the Wilderness Medical Society. We only do this on what are generally considered to be well established, standard routes. In line with the recommendation made by the Coroner where this does occur we have now introduced additional information regarding this into our Trip Notes for the relevant treks. This information highlights the higher increase on these days so our trekkers are fully aware of the strenuous nature of the trip and the larger ascents included. Our Trip Notes hold the full description of the trip and are available to all passengers prior to their booking a trip as well as being sent to them as the key element of our literature for a particular trip.

The information from the Wilderness Medical Society along with input from medical professionals, high altitude trekking and expedition safety experts are being



incorporated into a new protocol for our high altitude treks. This protocol is being designed to not only to look after the safety of our passengers but also reflect the logistical realities of operating high altitude treks around the world. This protocol will be used for the ongoing review of our trips as well as the standard for designing any new itineraries.

With regard to the knowledge of our trek leaders in respect of the travel insurance that passengers have we have reviewed the information and training that is provided to our trek leaders. This has always formed part of the training for our leaders and is incorporated into not only the initial training provided but also our ongoing refresher training. It is made clear to leaders that passengers take out travel insurance that will cover them for necessary medical expenses whilst on treks. It is further emphasised that the primary concern is always for the safety and wellbeing of the trekkers. Any decisions in this regard are to be made to provide the most suitable and effective remedy and not based on relative cost.

Further guidelines on always consulting any nearby medical posts, such as the one at Macchermo, in cases of illness, inability to continue with a trip or suspected AMS have also been put in place.

The general TAC overseas leader manual that did refer to finding cost effective solutions to more general situations has been removed from circulation to avoid any possibility of confusion in this regard.

I hope the above is of assistance. If I can be of any further help, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



**Managing Director**