

TO: All MUNFA Members
FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee
DATE: June 10, 2008
SUBJECT: Group Travel

We previously issued an Information Bulletin regarding the introduction of university policies that affect Academic Staff Members (ASMs) but which have had no or insufficient collegial consultation (see <http://www.mun.ca/munfa/ib070826.pdf>). One such set of policies relates to “Group Travel.” As it applies to ASMs a “Group” is defined by MUN’s Enterprise Risk Management as “one faculty member and one student/group member involved in a university related function such as field trips, conferences, meetings, etc.” We encourage ASMs to familiarize themselves with these policies before planning and/or proceeding on any group travel, field work, or field courses. In particular:

- All ASMs should visit the Enterprise Risk Management website (<http://www.mun.ca/erm/home/>) and, specifically that portion governing group travel (<http://www.mun.ca/erm/services/travel/index.php>). Of particular concern are requirements under “Vehicle Inspection” (when using a university vehicle or rental car) which make it the driver’s responsibility to check the vehicle before driving to make sure that the lights, brakes, horn and steering are operating properly. Also of concern are requirements under “Trip Management” which state: “No person may 1) Operate a vehicle for more than three and one half consecutive hours without a 30 minute break; 2) Operate a vehicle for more than seven total hours in one day; 3) Ride in a vehicle for more than 16 hours within a 24-hour period; 4) Drive without at least one other person awake in the seat next to the driver at all times; 5) Drive between 12:00 midnight and 6:00 A.M.” Noncompliance with these and other policies is likely to compromise coverage under the university’s insurance policies. The policy further states that any driver receiving a traffic citation or involved in an "at fault" accident will have withdrawn their permission to drive.
- ASMs in the Faculty of Science should also consult that Faculty’s policy for safety where there is “group travel” (i.e., field work, field studies, laboratory components in the field, field trips, etc.). The policy is online at: http://www.mun.ca/science/policies/Safety_Policy_document.pdf.

MUNFA representatives recently met with administration representatives from the Office of Faculty Relations and Enterprise Risk Management to discuss aspects of these policies. Our concern was the coordination between Enterprise Risk Management, Faculties of Science, Arts and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (SWGC) and Facilities Management (http://www.mun.ca/facman/Safety/Safety_Policies.php) with respect to aspects of group travel (field work, field courses, Harlow) which, at this time, is not well developed. Thus, there is the possibility of overlaps in required documentation and possible confusion about to whom, where and when reports or requests must be made. There have also been some complaints raised by ASMs about the wording and apparent implications of some statements in these policies or lack of statements to address various field situations.

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The administration pointed out that the purpose of these policies is to protect both the university and the ASM, as required by law and reinforced by the MOU signed between MUNFA and the University last year (<http://www.mun.ca/munfa/ib2006-07-39.pdf>). Those involved in developing the policies noted that these are early iterations in developing the documents and that they are open to feedback and comment from concerned ASMs, either directly, through their departments or MUNFA. If a trip or course is repeated in subsequent years, it is often possible to simply update the information on file, so that the procedure becomes much more transparent and less cumbersome with repeated use.

MUNFA and the university agreed that there was a need for better communication and coordination of these policies, and that Enterprise Risk Management would endeavour to do this and to include SWGC in these endeavours.