

Press release from AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Arctic expedition cruise industry introduces field staff standards

Qualified guides are key to responsible tourism in the Arctic. The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators has taken steps to ensure that guides have the relevant skills and training by introducing recommended field staff standards.

October 23, 2020, Tromsø, Norway

Arctic expedition cruising gives travellers the opportunity to get close to nature, observe wildlife and gain cultural experiences by visiting local communities. In order to carry out these activities in a responsible and sustainable manner, guides and expedition leaders are trained in areas such as safety, environmental considerations, cultural sensitivity and community engagement.

With the goal of creating a more standardized approach to field staff competency, AECO and The International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) have worked in partnership to develop standards for field staff working on board expedition cruise vessels in polar regions. The recommended standards were approved for AECO operators at their Annual General Meeting on October 15, 2020. For now, the standards are adopted as recommended industry standards that may evolve to become mandatory for AECO members.

According to Frigg Jørgensen, executive director of AECO, the new standards will help ensure a high level of competency among polar field staff in the future.

“Field staff are some of the most important decision-makers in our industry. They are on the frontline of operations where important decisions are made a wide range of areas, and they deal directly with guests. AECO’s members put great emphasis on training their guides and expedition leaders to deal with both day-to-day tasks as well as unplanned situations that may occur. The AECO & IAATO Field Staff Standards build on these existing training practices among members and establishes minimum requirements for staff qualifications. Adopting these recommended standards will benefit the cruise industry, the areas visited and the guests on board, as well as the field staff” says Jørgensen.

The standards have been compiled by experienced operator representatives and will be further developed as the industry gains experience in using them in practice. The standards cover areas such as first aid, crisis management, marine radio, navigation, tender boat driving, firearms, polar bear safety and onboard ship safety. The intention is not to design a

set of courses, operated and hosted by AECO or IAATO, but to set minimum standards which can be achieved through existing or new courses and training.

Suggested illustration photo

High resolution illustration image can be downloaded here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b19ydlxayr0gkrd/AAAYzO1tdw9Mb8zqdoqRiNc-a?dl=0>



Caption: Arctic field staff use a diverse skillset to carry out landings.

Photo by Ole Magnus Rapp

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AECO - Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators is an international organization for expedition cruise operators and associates in the Arctic, dedicated to managing environmentally friendly, safe and considerate cruise tourism. With around 75 international members – half of which are vessel operators, owners and management, and more than 50 expedition cruise vessels and smaller yachts that are organized by the association – AECO represent the great majority of these operations in the Arctic.

Website: www.aeco.no.

International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO)

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. IAATO has been carefully monitoring, analyzing and reporting Antarctic tourism trends since 1991 as part of its commitment to the effective self-management of guest activities. Every year at IAATO's annual meeting, members have open and candid discussions on safety, environmental protection and self-regulation. Decision-making is supported by recommendations developed by IAATO's many dedicated committees and working groups throughout the year. The meetings conclude annually with the voting in of new policies on best practice which support the association's mission.