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## Ethics in a Self-Regulating Group

September 15, 1999, Adam Filippino

Ethics is a broad and controversial subject. As BASE jumpers we exist under a stigma created by years of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. It is only recently that the general skydiving population has accepted BASE jumping as a positive thing. The general public and authorities are still uninformed and quick to draw conclusions and make judgments.

Adhering to a few simple principals will make the sport better for everyone. The following represents a simple set of rules to participate by. They are not necessarily intended as absolutes, but rather key points that can help shape our decisions about how we behave.

Respect our environment. Do not leave trash on trails, at exit points or in landing areas. Clean up after yourself. Remember first impressions last. If you garbage is what people find in the wake of a BASE jump we all appear to be litterbugs.

Adhere to local trail use guidelines. Don't be the one who forces restricted access to back country areas.

"Take only memories, leave only foot prints". Our activity should be transparent. It is not a spectator sport. Every uninvited spectator will increase awareness of our presence and this can eventually lead to reduced access.

**Every BASE jumper is an ambassador of the sport. Conduct yourself professionally.** Do not damage other's property in any way. Treat backcountry areas properly. If you are caught trespassing be polite and cooperative and be prepared to pay a fine based on local codes. Antagonize the authorities and they will come down HARD. Demonstrate that you are prepared and qualified at what you do and take responsibility for your actions and they will, at a minimum, have some respect for you. In a trespass situation the immediate assumption is that you are up to no good (usually stealing). Make it clear that your actions are not malicious.

Have a plan of action to contend with both injuries and deaths should they occur. During a crisis is not the time to make these types of decisions. Leaving the scene of an accident is not an option.

Treat BASE sites with respect. Flagrant or reckless exploitation of sites will only reduce the already limited number. Be careful with whom you share information.

Remember that it is not if you get caught but if you get seen.

When visiting an area, check with local jumpers to get the relevant information to safely and discretely jump at the local sites without causing problems. There are several public forums such as the BASE Board (<http://www.basellogic.com>) that can help you make contacts in new areas. Don't defy the local protocols unless you have an extremely good reason for doing so.

Promote the sport through education and professionalism, not self - promotion. Do not attempt to glorify yourself at the expense of the sport's image or the accessibility to an object.

The media is both our friend and our nemesis. Be cautious when dealing with them. Even if they empathize with your goals they will NEVER have the same goal as you when it comes to portraying the sport. Trash sells. Even the best-intentioned piece is forced to sensationalize to some degree if it is to sell in today's market.

When dealing with authorities demonstrate professionalism and a positive, responsible attitude. Remember, these are the people that have the single biggest influence on our access to sites.

Realize that BASE jumping is not for everyone. Certain people should not participate. More importantly, certain attitudes are not commensurate with safe and responsible jumping.

BASE jumping is not about cheating the reaper. BASE jumping is the science of low altitude parachute deployments and the art of self jump mastering. When we fail to treat it with forethought and respect - accidents result.