

# Govt rules might push insurers into covering adventure sports

## New Guidelines To Ensure Such Activities Are Not Excluded

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**Chennai:** When 53-year-old businessman Malleswara Rao crashed to his death in a paragliding accident in Coimbatore last year, the event organisers had not obtained the necessary permissions or insurance for participants. Rao had come to attend the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Coimbatore Medical College and paid Rs 500 as fee to participate.

Rao was lifted up into the air by a mini-load van and within seconds he crashed to the ground — after his safety belt got detached. He was pronounced dead on arrival. The tragedy was that the club had not obtained permission from the Airport Authority of India to conduct the event and neither was his family compensated.

Such incidents highlight the need for event organisers to take up insurance while conducting such events. Another major issue is that most insurance companies exclude engaging in adventure sports such as river rafting, sailing and deep-water scuba diving. “If you were to knowingly engage in a dirt bike racing event, bungee-jumping, paragliding, or any

### AN INSECURE GAMBLE



➤ **Most insurance companies do not cover** adventure sports, risky stunts for the Guinness Book of World Records or the Limca Book of Records

➤ However, **recent government guidelines might see more insurers** - coming forward in order to - **offer such covers**

➤ New guidelines mandate adventure tourists, operators and hotels **to take up personal accident insurance against possible injury or death**

other adventure sport, the insurance company would be well within its rights to reject any death or disability claim. Whether you have taken a life insurance policy or a personal accident policy, this is one of the first exclusions heading the list,” says a senior executive with United India Insurance Company.

This practice of insurers is also adverse towards Guinness Book of World Records and Limca Book of Records aspirants. “Many people never read the fine print when they buy life insurance or a personal accident policy. So, it is quite possible that they would engage in risky sports without knowing

that it is uncovered,” he says.

But there is cheer for adventure sports enthusiasts. Guidelines issued in October by the government and the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India has proposed mandatory insurance cover for adventure tourists, tourism operators and hotels to safeguard them against any losses, including injury and death from adventure tourism.

These guidelines state the need for 360-degree protection. Apart from covering the hospitalisation, the government has also said the policy should cover basic medical evacuation, be it in the air, on land, in water, on ice or in the mountains.

The guidelines state, “Adventure (tourism) operators must also consider having a personal accident and group medical covers for their staff, as well as directors’ and officers’ liability insurance. Better risk management, swift action and high-value financial security due to the coverage will lead to many more people venturing into outdoor pursuits, with a sense of calm and peace of mind. It’s a vital component of the vast growth potential of Indian adventure tourism.”

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance launched its Global Personal Guard Policy, which covers risky sports. The policy offers 12 add-on covers and features such as air ambulance, fractures and EMI payments that will take care of one’s financial liabilities due to any untoward event. “Over the last year, we have seen more than 1 lakh customers opting for this policy and following these guidelines, we expect further fillip in growth over the next few years. About 25% of the customers, who bought this policy, engage in adventure sports,” says Bhaskar Nerurkar, head-health administration team, Bajaj Allianz General.