

THE CARAVAN WRITERS' GUILD

CODE OF CONDUCT

General

Since the Guild is formed from specialist caravan writers who are able to write authoritatively on their subject, Members should at all times act in the best interests of the Guild. The following points provide a Code of Conduct with guidelines to acceptable standards.

Facility trips

At all times, Guild Members should endeavour to link facility trips to editorial coverage. In cases where block invitations are extended to the entire membership and this is not immediately possible, the host should be informed. It would nevertheless seem inappropriate for Members not to avail themselves of further knowledge on a particular region if there is a possibility of future coverage. When there is no intention whatever of this happening, the invitation should be declined.

Research

The importance of good research cannot be over-emphasised and every effort should be made to ensure factual accuracy. All too often one reads incorrect reports on caravanning matters, written by non-specialist journalists employed on local newspapers. It is one of the Guild's fundamental aims to be able to offer accurate copy from the membership.

Equipment for test

Guild Members, particularly magazine staff, frequently receive unsolicited items of equipment for test and unless specifically requested, manufacturers do not usually expect them to be returned. When freelance Members specifically request equipment for test or review, it should be only on the basis that they have a firm commission from an editor. Manufacturers should be made aware that such goods are always returnable, usually at their own expense.

If equipment, such as security items, is to be tested to destruction, manufacturers do not normally expect it to be returned. Larger items of equipment such as cars and caravans should at all times be returned in the same condition in which they are received. Externally this is not always possible due to lack of facilities or adverse weather conditions, but there is no excuse for interior dirt or unemptied toilets. Certain exceptions may apply in the case of large four-track vehicles belonging to some car manufacturers.

Equipment for DIY

Apart from magazine staff, Guild Members should request items of equipment for DIY type articles, only if they have a definite commission from an editor. It should also be made clear that such items are to be fitted to a caravan and will not be returned at the end of a project.

Equipment for review

Where Members wish to retain review equipment which is normally returnable, they should contact the manufacturer and make a reasonable purchase offer. (Members who are generally considered to be experts in their field, sometimes receive goods for long-term evaluation. In such cases, the manufacturer seldom expects editorial coverage, nor the return of the goods). Nevertheless, a subsequent factual report direct to the manufacturer would be in order.

Items of clothing

When items of clothing such as specialist weather wear are to be used for a simple round-up type of article, the manufacturer has the option of their return at his expense. If they are to be tested or subjected to long-term evaluation this is not normally the case. The position should always be clarified beforehand.

Caravan site reviews or inspections

It is important that the hospitality of site owners should not be abused, but at the same time it should be made clear that if the journalist or inspector is to write authoritatively about their site, he (and his partner) should experience the facilities first hand. Normally this entails a free overnight stay. It does not include the right to a free meal (although this may be offered by the site owner as a matter of courtesy).

In cases where a site is clearly not up to standard and the report is likely to be adverse, the inspector should pay his or her way fully, without accepting any hospitality. It should always be made clear that the final decision on publication is a matter for the editor commissioning the survey, whether it be for a magazine or guide book.

PR Members

Some Guild Members are engaged in PR work for companies within the caravan industry. Where this applies, they should not carry out assessment tests nor submit editorial copy, since their PR connections must render them unable to provide a completely unbiased evaluation of the equipment. Such practice is severely frowned upon by The Guild and PR Members should at all times declare any financial interests in the company employing them.