

Staff Rides

From <http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/staffride/index.html>

Staff rides were developed by the Prussian Army in the early nineteenth century and have been used by the militaries in many countries since then. In the 1970's the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps turned to [staff rides](#) with great enthusiasm and now they are considered essential instructional techniques in advanced military schools and in field units.

A staff ride is a case study that is conducted on the ground where the event happened. As the facilitator of a staff ride you are not merely a chauffeur for the participants, nor should you be obligated to provide a tour guide's monolog to the participants. What makes staff rides particularly stimulating is that they are group exercises. A staff ride requires active participation by all. Your role should be to encourage discovery learning by providing information references, orchestrating logistics, and serving as a moderator to generate group interaction. You should also become a subject matter expert.

A staff ride should avoid being a recital of a single investigation report. Such reports rarely address the human factors that affect individual decision-making. For this reason, providing participants with a variety of information sources is important.

The intent of a staff ride is to put participants in the shoes of the decision makers on a historical incident in order to learn for the future. A staff ride should not be a tactical-fault finding exercise. Participants should be challenged to push past the basic question of "What happened?" and examine the deeper questions of leadership and decision-making: "What would I have done in this person's place?" "How detailed should the guidance from a superior to a subordinate be?" "Can a senior leader make use of a competent but overzealous subordinate?" "What explains repeated organizational success or failure?" The study of leadership aspects in a staff ride transcend time and place.