

## What Is Hazing?

“Hazing is defined as any action or situation created, whether on or off fraternity or campus premises, which produces mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, anxiety or ridicule.”

These definitions are stated in general terms for a reason. Had they been stated in specific terms, it would have been virtually impossible to encompass all hazing activities. In addition, a specific definition of hazing that lists several activities passively condones any hazing activities that are not listed.

The Theta Xi Statement of Position on Hazing includes several examples that serve as a guide to chapters as to what specific activities would be considered hazing (“...use of alcohol, paddling in any form, creation of excessive fatigue, physical and psychological shocks, quests, treasure hunts, scavenger hunts, road trips or any other such activities carried on outside or inside of the confines of the chapter house; wearing of public apparel which is conspicuous and not normally in good taste, engaging in public stunts and buffoonery, morally degrading or humiliating games and activities, and any other activities which are not consistent with academic achievement...”). **BUT REMEMBER**, these are merely examples, and the omission of a certain activity from this list does not necessarily mean that it is not hazing.

If you are uncertain as to whether an activity is hazing but can answer “yes” to any of these questions, chances are that the activity in question is hazing:

- Is alcohol involved (Theta Xi's Risk Management Policy expressly prohibits alcohol during any AM activity or program.)
- Does the activity cause emotional or physical distress or pain?
- Is there risk of injury or a question of safety?
- Do you have any reservations about describing or justifying the activity to your parents, to a professor, or to a University official?
- Would you object if the activity were featured in the school newspaper or on a local TV news program?

Throughout the Associate Member program, we seek to educate and assimilate our new members into the chapter. In doing so, we strive to provide them with the skills to succeed academically and socially, thus enabling them to become leaders on campus, in the community and within Theta Xi. **Hazing directly contradicts this purpose.**

**When we haze, mentally or physically, we are not only doing so illegally, we could be robbing future members of the positive values we cherish as Theta Xi men.**

The result is AMs who REACT, not AMs who ACT. The result is AMs who OBEY, not AMs who CREATE. In the end, you are left with AMs who **simply get by** and not AMs who look to **excel**. Bottom line: With whom would you be more secure in taking on the leadership of your chapter in the future?

If you have questions about whether a particular activity is hazing or would like some assistance to develop alternative ideas, you can contact the Theta Xi HQ or your Greek Life Office for assistance.

## **Six Common Rationalizations for Hazing**

***Rationalization 1: "HAZING IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO TEACH RESPECT AND DEVELOP DISCIPLINE."***

The fact is that respect is an EARNED commodity. If the chapter is engaged in doing things completely worthwhile and fantastically important, the chapter will not have time to pass rules requiring respect. Respect will be earned when opportunities to learn leadership skills, develop interpersonal skills and form lifelong friendships are provided. Further, Associate Members will likely respect the efforts the Brothers they are watching have put forth to ensure that the chapter is an environment that will foster, not hinder, their development in these areas.

The key is to challenge Associate Members to want to be better, not demand action through degrading or abusive activities. Respect is earned through education and brotherhood. Respecting the **power** of the active members is NOT the goal; respecting Brotherhood builds respect for the true purpose and vision of what the fraternity experience can provide.

***Rationalization 2: "THESE EVENTS ARE A TRADITION AT OUR CHAPTER. I WENT THROUGH THEM, SO THEY SHOULD TOO."***

"Tradition" is never an appropriate excuse or justification for any act. For every positive tradition that is carried on, there may be an equal number of negative traditions that are perpetuated simply because they have been done in the past. One of the dangers of traditions is that sometimes they can stray from their initial purposes. Instead of reinforcing character and values, they can contradict them. **Do not rely on the past at the expense of your future.** The following narrative provides an example of how a detrimental tradition can be established and perpetuated.

## *Human Nature?*

*Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water.*

*After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result – all of the apes are sprayed with cold water. Turn off the cold water. If, later, another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them. Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, if he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs he will be assaulted.*

*Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm. Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape. After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes that have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced.*

*Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs. Why not? **“Because that is the way it has always been around here.”***

### ***Rationalization 3: “HAZING HELPS TO DEFINE THE LINE BETWEEN BROTHERS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.”***

The line between Brother and Associate Member is **being initiated**. During initiation, the ideological base and foundation for the fraternity is fully revealed. You then share a common experience and bond with every Theta Xi, past and present, in the world. When attempts are made to further draw distinctions between Brothers and AMs, it creates an environment of inequality and resentment and completely misdirects the attention of the Fraternity’s members from fulfilling their commitment to the Fraternity. Instead, encourage interactions and friendships between AMs and Brothers.

***Rationalization 4: "IF SOMEONE AGREES TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTIVITY, IT CANNOT BE CONSIDERED HAZING."***

Wrong. The courts have proven that the consent of the victim cannot be used as a defense in a civil suit. Even an individual agrees to participate in a potentially hazardous actions, it may not be true consent when considering the peer pressure and sense of expected obligation that new members often feel.

***Rationalization 5: "IT HELPS BUILD ASSOCIATE MEMBER CLASS UNITY."***

Associate Members already have so much in common (being new to the chapter and/or the campus, the feeling of obligation to "prove" themselves) that they will naturally bond together. To take advantage of this predisposition you need to provide them with shared, positive experiences. While shared threats or negative external forces will also drive a group together (sometimes called "pseudo-bonding"), these often times run unnecessary risks and are simply in opposition to the fundamentals of brotherhood. If your chapter has any "traditions" that are negative or inappropriate in design, take them one at a time and replace them with a well thought out, positive activity. When a man affiliates, he affiliates to the chapter, not the AM class. We must provide opportunities for interaction with all members.

***Rationalization 6: "BUT THE CHAPTER DOES NOT WANT TO CHANGE."***

It will be hard to convince some members to change. Change is quite often difficult, especially if it is approached in the wrong way. Yet risking the future of your chapter because of resistance to change is accepting the potential loss of some good men and even your chapter. The most important thing to remember in approaching change is that many other chapters either have never hazed or have already made the transition away from it. Resources are available to help.

**What Can I Do To Avoid Hazing In My Chapter?**

The best way to avoid hazing is to design a **meaningful** Associate Member program, following the Alpha 9 Core Program, that does not contain any hazing. You eliminate/avoid bad habits by adopting good ones. Analyze what needs certain members are trying to meet by using hazing tactics, and show them non-hazing activities that can meet those same needs.

Here are some needs you will probably find within your chapter's membership:

- A desire to have the new Associates care about Theta Xi as much as the brothers do.
- A desire to help the chapter improve.
- A desire to help the new Associates develop into productive brothers who will bring credit to Theta Xi.

- A desire to have the Associates (and Brothers as well) feel that their ultimate membership in Theta Xi was not just “handed to them.”
- A desire to have fun.
- A desire on the part of the membership to be involved in the assimilation of the new Associates in the chapter.

All of these (and more) can be accomplished without hazing! There can, of course, be some **unhealthy** needs that hazing is uniquely suited for **that simply need to be avoided**. Even with the best designed program and intentions, hazing can find its way into a chapter. This is usually caused by a lack of understanding of the program, hearing of other fraternities on campus, or even alumni from your own chapter who, for the lack of a quality program, had resorted to hazing and sincerely believe that only hazing can achieve the hope for results that are listed above.

Since hazing, in its various forms, has been in society for ages, it is simply going to take a continuous effort to eliminate it. To say that hazing does not work is naïve. It often does. But at what cost? And at what risk? And how can anyone say that it is consistent with the concept of justice or human dignity? How can deception (What hazing chapters admits to its potential recruits that they are going to be hazed?) be considered a precept of “fraternity”? **Simply put, there is no right way to do a wrong thing.** Every member has an obligation to ensure that his chapter upholds, the principles upon which it was founded, as well as to protect his own dignity. If you are an active member, you took an oath to uphold the Constitution of Theta Xi, which specifically prohibits any form of hazing. It is important, if you have witnessed any hazing or sense of growing mentality in which hazing would be accepted, that you act before it is too late. In every case where injury or even death has occurred, “brothers” have said, “But it never went this far before” or something to that effect. That is the “slippery slope” of hazing. To get to the core of the problem and address the issue before it becomes ones, it is important to focus on the following:

- **Awareness of your members:** Use case studies, news stories, and discussions of hazing practices to help inform members of the dangers and negative consequences of hazing.
- **The education of your members:** Use on-campus resources, attend leadership conferences , and utilize Theta Xi staff or your Greek Advisor to help educate members of your organization on ways to run a well designed and meaningful Associate Member program. Show them the alternatives. Realize that their first reaction to anything different than what they had to experience will probably not be positive.

- **Detection of violations by your members:** Remember, the organization can be held responsible for the hazing actions of individual members, even if the organization as a whole is not involved.
- **Corrective action:** Do not overlook any hazing problems you find in your chapter. It is crucial that those members who are found in violation of hazing policies be disciplined for their actions, up to and including possible suspension from the Fraternity.

To ensure that your chapter is not catering to a hazing mentality, implement the following criteria into your associate member program:

1. There should be no restrictions (except possibly a Ritual room, if applicable) on where the Associate Members can go in the house, what entrances they can use, etc.
2. There should be an equitable distribution of daily and weekly chores among Brothers and Associate Members alike, with mixed participation.
3. In addition to their weekly meeting, which is open to any initiated member, the Associate Members should be attend regular open (non-Ritual) meetings of the chapter.
4. Brothers and Associate Members should address each other in the same manner.
5. Avoid feeding the Associate Members incorrect information that may later make them look foolish. This type of action serves no other purpose than to undermine trust.
6. Avoid disrupting sleep patterns or study habits, and refrain from special “meals,” or causing meals to be missed.

**Be courageous.** Most people never speak up against hazing, because of their fear of being ridiculed. Consequently, those who support hazing, although they are in the minority, are the ones who are heard. Keep in mind, if you are aware of hazing activities but do not act, then you are also at fault.

If you have witnessed or know about inappropriate activities taking place in your organization, it is important that you notify an authority able and willing to remedy the violation. Some possibilities are:

1. Your Chapter Advisor
2. Your campus Greek Advisor
3. Theta Xi Headquarters
4. The Anti-Hazing Hotline (1-888 -NOT-HAZE) -- TOLL FREE and CONFIDENTIAL!

(Adapted from Delta Chi Fraternity)