



# Health and Safety Handbook

## For Employees and Key Volunteers

**This edition (February 2024) – Version 7.0**

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

[www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk)

[info@hmwt.org](mailto:info@hmwt.org)

Tel: 01727 858901

Registered office:

Grebe House, St Michael's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL3 4SN

Registered charity no: 2339863

A company registered by guarantee no: 816710

### Change log

Ver	Date	Details
1.2	25 March 2013	Incorporated info from Kent Wildlife Trust's Health & Safety Handbook
2.0	26 March 2013	JHD - Circulated to MT for comment
3.0	30 July 2013	JHD - Incorporates MT comments
4.0	2 October 2013	JHD - Incorporates MT comments. Still needs diagram of responsibilities
5.0	11 November 2013	JHD – rolled out to staff
6.0	2 May 2014	Added reporting forms to Appendix
7.0	01 February 2024	Thorough review and re-drafting with all Trust staff consulted

Note:

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# 1 Distribution

**A digital copy of the complete handbook should be given to:**

All staff. Volunteers who undertakes practical work or activities on behalf of the Trust such as Wardens or those leading an event

**Electronic copies of procedures, risk assessment etc. referenced in this H&S Handbook can be obtained from the Health and Safety Manager.**

**Printed copies are available on request.**

Health and Safety Policies, Procedures and Templates are held electronically on the shared Z drive: [Z:\22 H&S](#) and via the Health and Safety Volunteer SharePoint Site – contact the Health and Safety Manager for access.

**\*This Health and Safety Handbook is designed to act as an aide memoir and guide – it is not intended to duplicate existing health and safety Policies, Procedures and Guidance.**

**Please help Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to ensure the safety of people who work with and for it.**

Suggestions for improvements to this handbook should be sent to:

Health and Safety Manager  
[Justin.tyas@hmwt.org](mailto:Justin.tyas@hmwt.org)

## 2 Preface

The Trust manages offices at Grebe House and has facilities to store equipment at Beech Farm and has over 40 Nature Reserves that are owned, leased or managed on behalf of other organisations. Trust staff and volunteers also work at other locations on a temporary basis e.g. doing surveys, events and assisting others including conservation/habitat works in the wider countryside team.

This handbook is designed to encourage safe working throughout Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust ("the Trust"). It includes the Trust's Health & Safety Policy and forms part of the Trust's Health and Safety procedures as summarised below.

1. **Health and Safety Policy** - all staff and key volunteers must have access to this document which sets out the Trust's overall approach to health and safety and our procedures.
2. **Risk Assessment** - As an employer, the Trust must protect employees and others including volunteers and risk assessment forms part of the overall process to control risks. This will include but is not limited to work (including volunteering) on nature reserves and within the wider countryside, running events and other task specific activities. The Trust has developed a number of generic risk assessments for common tasks and activities.
3. **Safe Working Procedures (SWPs)** - this handbook contains a list of key SWPs developed from risk assessment which will help staff or volunteers to assess the risks associated with particular activities, equipment or materials. The complete list of Safe Working Procedures is held on the Trust's Health and Safety Shared Drive and Volunteer Health and Safety SharePoint Site.
4. **Training** - health and safety training is mandatory for employees as part of Health and Safety Legislation. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has indicated that it is good practice to train volunteers to the same standard as employees if they are undertaking the same tasks. Mandatory training with relevant certification must be in place and maintained where necessary. For example, anyone, including volunteers, using power tools such as chainsaws and brushcutters.
5. **First Aid and Emergency Procedures** – The Trust has a First Aid Policy and is committed to providing sufficient numbers of First Aid personnel and resources to deal with accidents, injuries and medical emergencies occurring at work.

The Trust will provide information and training on First Aid to employees and other suitable persons such as volunteers, where appropriate, to ensure that statutory requirements and the needs of the organisation are met.

The Trust has a good safety record but accidents and incidents do occur to staff, volunteers and visitors. It is essential that we take steps to minimise risks and that we learn from accidents and incidents so as to prevent reoccurrences.

This handbook has been provided to all Trust staff, and all key volunteers and other relevant persons. Paper copies can be available from the Trust's headquarters at Grebe House for any person who is engaged in any form of work on behalf of the Trust, who does not have access to a digital copy.

Thank you.



Lesley Davies  
Chief Executive  
Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

## 2.1 Health and Safety Management

Organisations have a legal duty to put in place suitable arrangements to manage for health and safety.

### The Plan, Do, Check, Act Approach

HSE has moved to a 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' approach for managing health and safety which achieves a balance between the systems and behavioural aspects of management. It also treats health and safety management as an integral part of good management generally, rather than as a stand-alone system. This is the approach the Trust has adopted for its safety management system and can be summarised as:

- **Plan** - Determine your policy/Plan for implementation
- **Do** - Profile risks/Organise for health and safety/Implement your plan
- **Check** - Measure performance (monitor before events, investigate after events)
- **Act** - Review performance/Act on lessons learned

Comprehensive guidance is available from the HSE's website and the document HSG 65:

[Managing for Health and Safety](#)

### 3 Health and Safety Policy

#### Statement of General Policy

1. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust ('the Trust') is aware of its duties as an employer under the Health & Safety at Work Act etc.1974 and its policy is to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff and volunteers. The Trust will take all reasonably practicable steps to achieve this commitment, to comply with our statutory obligations and to promote a positive health and safety culture throughout our organisation. Similarly, the Trust recognises its duty to protect the health and safety of all visitors, including contractors and temporary workers, as well as any members of the public who might be affected by the Trust's operations.
2. Health and safety is an integral part of the Trust's activities, and while the Chief Executive takes overall day-to-day responsibility, the Board of Trustees, Heads of Departments, line managers, employees and others that are representing the Trust share the responsibility for implementing this policy.
3. The Trust will provide a safe and healthy working environment for staff and volunteers with the objective of minimising the risk of injury or ill-health. The Trust will pay particular attention to:
  - Undertaking risk assessments in order to review the health and safety of our activities and premises and implementing safe systems of work as a result
  - Providing and maintaining machinery, equipment and work systems which are as safe as reasonably possible to use and without risk to health
  - Making arrangements for ensuring safety and absence of health risks for the use, handling, storage and transport of livestock, goods, materials and substances
  - Providing necessary information, instruction, training and supervision needed to minimise health and safety risks
  - Maintaining arrangements for emergency response, including fire and first aid.
  - Investigating accidents, incidents, near misses and incidences of work-related ill health.
  - Consulting with staff on matters affecting their health and safety.
4. The Trust will take steps to check the competence of any contractor before their services are engaged and will ensure that third parties are provided with appropriate information on entering its premises and in relation to its work activities.
5. The Trust will maintain a health and safety database on its server which will give details of Trust policies, codes of practice, risk assessments and safe working procedures.
6. Any accidents, incidents or near misses involving a member of staff, volunteer, visitor or other person which occur on Trust premises or sites and are related to a Trust work activity, must be recorded on the Trust's Accident / Incident Form. They are to be promptly investigated in accordance with the accident / incident reporting procedure to ensure lessons are learnt and to prevent a re-occurrence. Cases of work-related ill health are recorded as part of the Trust's HR record-keeping procedures. The Trust will ensure it complies with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013.
7. The Trust will ensure effective mechanisms are in place for the proactive monitoring of safety systems and control measures through appropriate monitoring and inspection programmes. The Trust will also ensure suitable Health Surveillance is in place as identified by risk assessment.
8. The Trust will ensure robust arrangements are in place for managing wellbeing as outlined in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

## Responsibilities

9. The overall Responsibility for implementing the Trust's Health and Safety Policy lies with the Council of Management (Trustees who are Company Directors). They will have due regard for the Institute of Directors (IoD) / HSE Guidance: [Leading health and safety at work - Leadership actions for directors and board members](#).
10. Day to day responsibility for health and safety management is delegated to the Chief Executive. They will provide leadership to ensure good standards of health and safety performance.
11. The Senior Leadership Team / Heads of Departments are ultimately responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Trust's Health and Safety Policy, systems and procedures under their areas of control.
12. All managers are responsible for ensuring that activities carried out under their control are conducted safely and in accordance with relevant safety legislation, safety policies and their local procedures. Some of these responsibilities may be delegated to supervisors or other competent staff, as appropriate. Delegation does not remove responsibility.
13. The Trust has a dedicated Health and Safety Manager who reports to the Head of Business Support. The Health and Safety Manager acts as the Trust's "Competent Person" as required under Regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The Chief Executive will be advised by the Trust's Health & Safety Manager and the Health, Safety and Personnel Committee, consisting of staff and Trustees appointed by Council.
14. Health and safety at work is also the responsibility of staff and volunteers. It is the duty of each individual to take reasonable care of their own and other people's health, safety and welfare and to report any situation which may pose a threat to the wellbeing of themselves or of any other person. They must not recklessly interfere with or misuse any equipment or systems intended for ensuring health and safety.
15. If an employee or volunteer is unsure how to perform a certain task or feels it would be dangerous to perform a specific job or use specific equipment, then it is the employee's / volunteer's duty to report this as soon as possible to their line manager, their health and safety representative or the Health and Safety Manager. Alternatively, an employee may, if they prefer, invoke the Trust's formal grievance procedure. A volunteer may make a written complaint. Employees and volunteers can invoke the Trust Whistleblowing Policy if they reasonably believe that underhand or illegal practices are taking place. The Trust will protect them from victimisation, harassment or bullying occasioned as a result of the disclosure.
16. This policy will be drawn to the attention of all new employees as part of their induction. It is the duty of each employee to familiarise themselves with and implement Trust procedures and to report any perceived shortcomings in the arrangements.
17. Disciplinary action under the Trust's disciplinary procedures may be taken against any employee who fails to perform their duties under health and safety legislation. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to potential gross misconduct rendering the employee liable to summary dismissal.



## 4 Organisational Responsibilities

### Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has day-to-day responsibility for the Trust. They will:

- Provide leadership to ensure good standards of health and safety performance
- Ensure the provision of competent health and safety advice
- Ensure adequate resources are available for health and safety (such as the delivery of training, provision of systems and procedures), as necessary
- Ensure that the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the Trust health safety and wellbeing policies and other statutory requirements are sufficient

### Senior Management Team (SMT)

SMT members are ultimately responsible for ensuring the implementation of Trust health and safety and wellbeing policies, along with subordinate arrangements within their areas of responsibility.

### Managers and Team Leaders

All managers are responsible for ensuring that activities carried out under their control are conducted safely and in accordance with relevant safety legislation, safety policies and their local procedures. Some of these responsibilities may be delegated to competent staff members.

Delegation does not remove responsibility and managers need to check periodically that the responsibilities are being discharged.

The **Directors of Nature Recovery and Development** are responsible for taking a strategic role in ensuring third party arrangements under their areas of responsibility are appropriately articulated, documented and clarified where necessary to ensure suitable health and safety standards are achieved so far as is reasonably practicable.

### Head of Business Support

Responsible for the Trust headquarters, including contractor management, fire safety and evacuation, security, insurance, asbestos register and maintaining suitable health and safety records and reporting. They are also responsible for central health and safety training, first aid needs assessment and the development of health, safety and wellbeing policies. In practice the day-to-day responsibility for implementation is shared, where appropriate, between the Facilities, Human Resources and Health and Safety Managers.

The **Head of Finance**, supported by the Health and Safety Manager where necessary, is responsible for ensuring suitable health and safety standards are embedded and maintained within the Trust's contractor procurement and selection procedures and monitoring arrangements.

The **Nature Reserves Manager is responsible** for health and safety matters relating to Trust reserves (including events held on reserves and guided walks on reserves led by Trust Reserves staff or volunteers under their control) and for reporting to the Director of Nature Recovery on all relevant health and safety matters where necessary.

Those visiting our reserves including members of public are responsible for complying with relevant Trust signage, guideline and other procedures where necessary. Non-Reserves staff organising events or undertaking activities on nature reserves must inform the Nature Reserve Manager or their designated seniors.

Nature Reserves are the designated team for the day-to-day management of Beech Farm in consultation/liaison with the wider countryside (Nature Recovery) staff.

The **Nature Reserves Manager, Conservation Manager and Planning and Policy Manager** are responsible for ensuring all activities under their respective control are adequately risk assessed and that suitable safety working procedures are in place to protect staff, volunteers and others so far as reasonably practicable.

The **Health and Safety Manager** is responsible for developing policy and guidance for the Trust in consultation with stakeholders. They will provide advice and guidance, investigate accidents and incidents, making recommendations where necessary to enhance water safety management.

### **Employees' general responsibilities**

The Trust reminds its employees and volunteers that you have a legal responsibility to:

- take all reasonable care of your health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by your acts or omissions, while at work
- co-operate with the Trust to enable it to discharge its obligations satisfactorily
- you must not intentionally, or recklessly interfere with anything provided for your health and safety

You must immediately cease any task or stop using any machines, equipment or work places if they become unsafe - if in doubt – stop work and seek advice.

All accidents, incidents and near misses involving employees and volunteers or involving other people affected by the Trust's operations, must be recorded on the appropriate Form, investigated and any action required must be followed up. Any reasons for not being able to implement identified follow up action must be raised with the Health and Safety Manager.

### **Responsibility to the public and other non-employees**

The Trust has a duty to ensure that non-employees are not exposed to risks to their health and safety by the activities it undertakes. This includes members of the public and others who may be working on Trust sites.

Volunteers shall be treated as staff employees from the point of view of health and safety at work matters and shall be informed of any special qualifications or skills required to carry out the work safely. With regards to insurance, they are covered under the same policy.

**Volunteers** are responsible for taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and others who may be affected by activities under their direct control (e.g. work party volunteer leader). Volunteers must cooperate with the Trust on all matters of health and safety, following all relevant safe working procedures and guidance. They must not undertake any activities outside of the agreed scope of their volunteering with the Trust and must bring to the Trust's attention any health and safety concerns. Volunteers must also comply with the procedures and guidance as documented within the [Volunteer Handbook](#).

## **5 Health Safety and Personnel Committee**

The Health, Safety & Personnel Committee (HSPC) is a Committee of Council. It provides for important issues relating to health, safety and personnel to be considered in more detail than at Council meetings, enabling its members to comment on reports for the consideration by or approval of Council.

The HSPC support the development and delivery of the Trust's strategy, reviewing staff structure, staff wellbeing, health and safety, safeguarding and policies. The Executive lead is the Head of Business Support.

The Terms of Reference for the HSPC (January 2022) can be found [here](#). The HSPC is a consultative Committee and meets once a quarter. It is Chaired by a Trustee.

## 6 Health & Safety Indicative Structure and Responsibilities

Responsibility		Information
<p>Trustees have final overall responsibility</p> <p>Chief Executive is responsible for Health &amp; Safety operationally</p> <p>MT responsible for H&amp;S in their areas</p> <p>* HSM = Health &amp; Safety Manager</p>	<pre> graph TD     Council[Council] --- CE[Chief Executive]     CE --- HS&amp;P[HS&amp;P Committee]     CE --- MT[Management Team]     MT --- IHS[Internal H&amp;S Meeting once a quarter chaired by HSM]     MT --- TM[Team meetings]     Staff[Staff]     Volunteers[Volunteers]     </pre> <p><b>Staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for day to day H&amp;S</li> <li>- Report Accidents / Incidents / Near misses to Line Manager / HSM</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Warden work parties run to same standard as staff lead work parties</li> <li>- Follow instructions from task leader</li> <li>- Report concerns to staff member leading or Primary Contact</li> </ul>	<p>H&amp;S on Council agenda (4x per year)</p> <p>HSPC meets 4x per year</p> <p>H&amp;S standing item monthly</p> <p>Minutes of HSPC H&amp;S Bulletins etc.</p> <p>Volunteer H&amp;S newsletter Warden Quarterly e-mail All warden meeting annually</p>

## 7 Visitor safety when visiting Trust properties or participating in events

[Based upon Visitor Safety Group (VSG) Principles: <https://www.visitorsafety.group/>]

We aim to provide a safe environment for visitors to our places, and ensure that the work of our staff, volunteers and contractors does not jeopardise visitors' safety or health. Visitor information can be found on the Trusts website and as part of the event management procedure.

Visitors can help us by:

- Observing all notices and signs during their visit.
- Following any instructions and advice given by Trust staff.
- Ensuring that children and any vulnerable adults are properly supervised at all times.
- Wearing appropriate clothing and footwear for the place being visited.

At all our sites the responsibility for the safety of visitors should be seen as one that is shared between the Trust and the visitor. The Trust takes reasonable measures to minimise risks in ways that are compatible with our conservation objectives – but not to eliminate all risks. The Trust will work carefully with any third-party sites where events are held to ensure that risks are minimised and the environment is appropriate.

This is especially the case on our nature reserves, where we aim to avoid measures that might restrict access or affect people's sense of freedom and adventure that are compatible with our conservation objectives

To help ensure their own safety, visitors should:

- Take note of weather conditions and forecasts and be properly equipped for changes in the weather. Some places may close in severe weather conditions. Any closures would be noted on the Trust's website.
- Make sure they are properly prepared, equipped and clothed for the terrain and the activity in which they are participating.
- Tell others where they intend to go and their estimated time of return.
- Make sure they have the necessary skills and abilities for the location and activity, and are aware of their own limitations.
- Follow any additional guidance provided. For example, pre-event information / health and safety talk at the start of the event.

## 8 Insurance

The Trust has public liability insurance, renewed annually, covering members of the public, and employer's liability insurance covering staff and registered volunteers. In both cases this covers claims up to £10 million.

In addition, the Trust has a Group Personal Accident Plan offering additional cover for staff and volunteers. Volunteers must only undertake activities which they feel capable of undertaking. Volunteers must let the task leader know of any medical or other condition which may place themselves or others around them at greater risk. The Trust need to be able to demonstrate that they have assessed the competency of individuals to carry out an activity.

## 9 New and expectant mothers who work

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 include regulations that protect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers who work. Once the Trust has been provided with written notification of a pregnancy or birth in the last six months, a specific risk assessment will be carried out and reasonable adjustments made to control or remove risks if possible. The risk assessment should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Further information is available for new and expectant mothers from either the Human Resources or Health and Safety Manager or [www.hse.gov.uk/mothers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers).

## 10 First aid and emergencies

It is a legal requirement to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees and volunteers if they are injured or become ill at work.

This is required wherever the staff and volunteers are working, i.e. in the office, on reserves or at an event.

There is also a requirement to plan for, and have procedures in place to deal with, serious and emergency events where there is imminent danger. Where necessary, competent persons should be nominated and trained to enable the emergency procedures to be carried out. An example of this is the fire evacuation procedures and the nomination and training of Fire Marshals to manage the evacuation and to liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service.

### 10.1 First Aid

First aid can be defined as:

*“The provision of treatment for the preservation of life and minimising the consequences of injury and illness until medical help is obtained, and the treatment of minor injuries which would otherwise receive no treatment or which does not require professional medical treatment.”*

The Trust is committed to providing sufficient numbers of First Aid personnel and resources to deal with accidents, injuries and medical emergencies occurring at work as set out in our [First Aid Policy](#) which is underpinned by First Aid Needs Assessment.

The Trust has a [Medical Emergency Response Procedure](#) when someone is seriously ill and in need of immediate emergency medical care – including how and when to summon an ambulance.

The Trust has determined that for outdoor working the following courses (or agreed equivalents) are the standard to be applied:

- Outdoor First Aid Level 2 with Forestry Commission syllabus (“+F”) - 16 hours (2-days)
  - For higher risk profile activities including chainsaw operations / leading a work party
- Outdoor First Aid Level 1 (“+F”) – 8 hours (1-day)
  - Lower risk profile activities – for example where power tools other than chainsaws are used/ leading outdoor activity other than work party

**Appointed Person** is a person to take charge of the first-aid arrangements, including looking after the equipment and facilities (e.g. checking and, as appropriate, replenishing the first aid boxes).

### 10.2 First Aid Kits

The Trust supplies First Aid kits based on task/need and each person responsible i.e. **designated First Aider** must ensure that the appropriate First Aid kit is available and properly stocked. A register of First Aid kits is maintained by the **Business Support Assistant/s** and shows who is responsible for each First Aid kit. Each kit contains a list of recommended contents, any item taken from a First Aid kit should be replaced as soon as possible. Some replacement items are available from Grebe House or may need to be ordered; contact the Business Support Assistant.

Many items in the first aid kits have expiry dates, so quarterly checks should be undertaken to ensure all the items remain in date (and will do so until the date of the next check). This should be undertaken by the first aider responsible for the first aid kit.

First aid kits **must not** contain medication of any kind. Aspirin only may be kept for use in the event of a heart attack. Plasters should be included and used on cuts or grazes for protection. The first aider should check whether the injured patient has any specific allergies to plasters.

### **Handwashing**

Soap, water and/or gel should be available, when working with or in water and at all working parties.

## **10.3 Accident, Incident and Near Miss Reporting**

By law, all accidents, incidents and near misses should be reported as soon as practicably possible. Completed forms should be returned to the Health and Safety Manager within 48 hours who will review and investigate further where necessary

The Trust has detailed guidance on [Accident, Near Miss and Incident Reporting](#) and an additional [Flow Chart](#) has been produced for quick reference.

Copies of the [Accident and Near Miss form](#) can be downloaded from the link.

A log of all accidents and incidents is maintained. Significant accidents, incidents and near misses are raised at the monthly SMT meeting. Quarterly reports are provided to the HSPC and serious accidents and incidents are reported promptly to Council

All records will be held in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

### **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)**

By law the Trust must report certain workplace injuries, near-misses and cases of work-related disease to HSE. This duty is under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (2013), known as RIDDOR. The Health and Safety Manager is responsible for statutory reporting under RIDDOR.

In the case of a serious accident, incident or near miss such as hospitalisation or death a member of staff or volunteer the Senior Management Team (SMT) must be immediately notified along with the Health and Safety Manager.

## **10.4 What to do in the case of an emergency (accident or serious health and safety incident)**

- **Immediate action**
  - Assess the situation- ensure you are safe.
  - Ensure the safety of colleagues and the public.
  - Deal with any casualties.
  - Contact emergency services by dialling 999, as appropriate
- **Once the emergency is over**
  - Inform the Trust, as soon as possible
  - During office hours:  
Contact Grebe House in person or by telephone providing your contact details for next 48 hours. Ensure message reaches a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT)
  - Out of office hours:  
If serious, phone the Trust's switchboard and select the option to contact the on-call number. The member of staff manning the emergency number should contact the Chief Executive or nominated deputy if necessary.
  - If in doubt, phone!
- **Write detailed notes** recording what happened as soon as possible after the accident/incident.
- **Record any accident, near miss or incident** - at the earliest opportunity.

### **Action by the Health and Safety Manager**

- Logs, investigates, monitors and completed statutory reporting where necessary

### **Action by Chief Executive / SMT**

- Informs appropriate people (internally and externally, as appropriate)
- Ensures an Investigating Officer (usually H&S Manager along with responsible manager) is appointed and sets a timetable for reporting
- Reviews the outcome of the investigation and implements procedural changes/training as required
- Reports to the HSPC and Trustees, as appropriate
- Informs the Trust's insurers where appropriate.

**All staff should ensure they are familiar with the detailed arrangements before starting work.**

## **11 Fire Safety**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – “the Fire Safety Order” – provides a framework for regulating fire safety in all non-domestic premises including workplaces and the parts of multi-occupied residential buildings used in common in England and Wales.

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (the “Trust”) acknowledge its duty under the Fire Safety Order to take all necessary steps, as far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the safety of all staff, volunteers and visitors and any other Relevant Persons from the dangers of fire.

The Trust has a written [Fire Safety Policy Statement](#) setting out its commitment to fire safety and detailing further arrangements.

All staff and volunteers will be instructed in the Trust's fire evacuation procedures as part of their induction when they first start work and reminded periodically thereafter. The Trust carries out regular fire drills, weekly fire alarm testing and monthly emergency lighting tests of Grebe House and works with the Museum / SDC to ensure these are in place at the Annex. Beech Farm does not have an automatic fire alarm or emergency lighting.

The Health and Safety Manager completes an annual fire risk assessment and review for the Trust's operational (workplace) buildings where it has control: Grebe House and Beech Farm.

### **11.1 Fire Evacuation Plans**

Detailed arrangements for fire evacuation can be found in:

[Grebe House Fire Evacuation Plan](#)

[Beech Farm Fire Evacuation Notice](#)

All staff and relevant volunteers should be familiar with their local evacuation arrangements.

### **11.2 Precautions to reduce the risk of fire - buildings**

Smoking is prohibited in Trust offices and at Beech Farm.

Regular electrical inspections are carried out on portable electrical equipment to reduce the risk of fires being started by faulty appliances.

All electrical equipment/machinery must be turned off at the end of the day (except those intended to run through the night i.e. fridges or are required to be on constantly such as IT servers).

Sources of potential accidental ignition should be eliminated and protected against.

Combustible material must be stored appropriately. Combustible materials/rubbish must not be allowed to accumulate unnecessarily or stored near radiators or heaters or under the stairs or in stairwells.

### 11.3 Precautions to reduce the impact of fire - buildings

**Fire exits and exit signs:** Adequate means of escape in case of fire are a vital necessity in all premises. All fire escape routes are clearly marked and must be kept free of obstructions (both internally and externally).

**Clear access:** All staff/volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the floor space is not cluttered allowing ease of access to fire exits and fire extinguishers.

**Fire doors:** These **must** remain shut at all times unless protected by doorguard, but unlocked when the premises are occupied.

Fire alarm testing is carried out on a weekly basis by the Health and Safety Manager. A record of each test is kept. Staff will be warned of these tests. If you have any difficulty hearing the alarm, you must inform your Line Manager.

**Regular fire drills** are held without prior warning to staff and any resultant faults in the fire procedures reported to the Health and Safety Manager, who will investigate and implement further controls where necessary.

### 11.4 Fighting fires

If possible, and if you have been trained to use extinguishers, employees may tackle a small fire themselves only if it would pose no threat to their personal safety to do so and they must only use appropriate firefighting equipment. **Under no circumstances take any personal risks.**

**Firefighting equipment** appropriate to the situation is installed. Equipment is maintained in good condition by annual checks under contract, but any damage or use of the extinguishers **must** be reported to your Manager and the Health and Safety Manager.

#### Fire Extinguishers

Type	Identified by	Use
<b>WATER:</b>	<b>red with white lettering</b>	On wood, paper, textiles, fabric and similar materials
<b>CARBON DIOXIDE (CO<sub>2</sub>)</b>	<b>red with black lettering</b>	On burning liquid and electrical fires
<b>DRY POWDER</b>	<b>Red with blue lettering</b>	Most types of fire including flammable liquids (not oils and fats). <b>Carried on Trust vehicles</b>
<b>FIRE BLANKETS</b>		To smother flames, located in kitchen

### 11.5 Reducing the risk of fire at Beech Farm

All electrical equipment to be switched off and unplugged when not in use.

Fire extinguishers are provided and maintained at fixed locations adjacent to all buildings. These are serviced annually.

Flammable substances are stored in a locked flammables cabinet – and must not be stored in any other part of the building.

The skip is located at a safe distance from the building.

Good housekeeping to be maintained at all times. Waste must not be allowed to accumulate.

In the event of a fire, staff should assemble at the assembly point and immediately call the Fire Brigade.



## 11.6 Reducing the risk of fire in Trust vehicles

All vehicles are inspected weekly and serviced/maintained in-line with manufacturer's recommendations.

All vehicles are fitted with powder fire extinguishers, which are serviced annually.

Smoking is forbidden in all Trust vehicles and no-smoking stickers are displayed (Smoke free regulations, July 2007).

## 11.7 Storage, transportation and safe use of fuel

### Storage of fuel

All Trust fuel should be contained within approved plastic containers which are themselves stored within a fireproof storage bin. As all Trust stores are situated within existing sheds / workrooms, the total amount of fuel stored must not exceed 50 litres.

Activities that may increase the risk of fire should not be carried out in the vicinity of the store.

When used in the field the containers should be positioned 20m from equipment that is being used and out of direct sunlight. Always be sure of the location of your approved fuel containers and safeguard them from theft or improper use.

When transferring fuel, an antispill nozzle must be used, the machine must be switched off and there must be no naked flame or other source of spark within 20m. Flammable fuels can also lead to breathing difficulties and some are carcinogenic, so it is important to minimise any contact with the fuel or its vapour. Undertake any transfer of fuel carefully but as quickly as possible, ensure good ventilation and avoid breathing in the vapour. Wipe off any spillage with a cloth as quickly as possible and wash hands thoroughly as soon as possible. Spill kits should be on-hand while transferring fuel and fuelling machinery.

### Transportation of fuel

The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations are the regulations which deal with the carriage of dangerous goods including flammable liquids. However, the storage of petrol on "non-dispensing premises" is governed by the Petroleum (Consolidation) Regulations 2014 and these permit the carriage in a vehicle of **no more than 30 litres of petrol in no more than 2 suitable portable (approved) containers / fuel storage boxes fitted to vehicles.**

Petrol is stored in suitable approved containers of 10l or less, and diesel is stored in containers of 25l or less, there is the **maximum 30 litre** above, restriction on the amount petrol that can be carried in a vehicle and whilst there are no limits to **the amount of diesel that can be carried**, the Trust has limited this to a **maximum of 30 litres in approved containers.**

The following requirements are to be observed by the driver, operator or any other person:

- Ensure that nothing is done which might create significant risk (or significantly increase any existing risk) of fire or explosion while dangerous goods are being transported. Anyone who comes in contact with the vehicle is bound by this duty
- Ensure that the smoking ban is enforced in/near the vehicle

Any faults in a vehicle or machine that could lead to a fuel leak must be dealt with immediately.

It is good practice not to carry more fuel than is required for the day's work

## 11.8 Burning on reserves

A detailed Risk Assessment for bonfires (RA9) has been prepared, accompanied by a Safe Working Procedure (SWP9)

In summary, there is no general ban on the use of fires by work parties unless prohibited by SSSI status. The waste material from activities such as coppicing, felling and grass cutting should not be burnt if other uses can be found.

A statement of what can and cannot be burnt, agreed locations if specified and methods of burning (i.e. on metal sheets) must be included in the management or action plan for your reserve.

If waste material has to be burnt then you must ensure the following:

- keep fire sites on a reserve to an absolute minimum
- fire sites are in a clear area with no overhanging branches and no underground root system that are close to the surface. (In dry conditions roots can ignite and spread the fire underground).
- never light fires in very windy conditions
- never use petrol or other flammable substances to light or to sustain a fire
- consider the wind direction. Do not light a fire if the smoke will be blowing across a road or into neighbouring gardens
- never leave a strongly blazing fire unattended
- Fire prevention equipment should be close by - i.e. water, fire beaters or fire extinguishers
- when a fire is planned always carry a good quantity of clean water in case of burns. There are burns kits within the first aid provision.
- avoid excessive inhalation of smoke, as long-term exposure is a hazard to health
- when leaving the reserve make sure the fire is either out or at a stage where it is not likely to cause damage
- you must not leave until you have satisfied yourself that you have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent damage or injury from the fire. Prohibition signs and hazard tape should be used where there is a significant risk of public access. The fire should be out before site is left.

With grassland or forest fires it is very unlikely that staff will have the equipment to fight anything but the smallest fires, so the Fire Service should be called and advice sought from them.

Evacuation procedures for each reserve are included within the Emergency Action Plan for that reserve.

## 12 Risk Assessment

As an employer, the Trust is required by law to protect its employees, and others including volunteers, from harm.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum you must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in your business (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

Assessing risk is just one part of the overall process used to control risks in your workplace.

Other than for trivial risks, the significant findings of these assessments must be **written** down. The results of the assessment and subsequent control measures must be made known to staff, volunteers and contractors.

Other legislation e.g. COSHH, Manual Handling, Visual Display Screen Equipment, Working at Heights, etc... require risk assessments. Where this has been carried out for the activity in question, there is no need for a separate assessment.

## 12.1 Risk assessment process

Risk assessments should be conducted by those who are familiar with the tasks and activities being assessed. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requires employers to consider the *competency* i.e. the knowledge, skills and experience of those undertaking risk assessments.

The Trust has produced detailed guidance on the [risk assessment process and procedure](#). The Trust also has a short e-learning Risk Assessment training course which must be arranged for staff undertaking risk assessments with the Health and Safety Manager along with a face-to-face briefing where necessary. A short [presentation on risk assessment](#) has also been produced.

The Trust has identified the majority of tasks that are undertaken and equipment used, and has developed generic task risk assessments for these. Based on these risk assessments, a series of Safe Working Procedures (SWP) have been produced to manage these risks.

The SWPs are the working guidance documents that should, as a general rule, be followed. Where the “must” is found in the SWPs, this is a definite instruction that has to be followed. The SWP should usually be followed. If it is not followed completely, any variation needs to be justified on each occasion, via the Trust’s Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) procedure.

The DRA is a process in which workers/volunteer leaders (*Responsible Person*) continually assess the hazards and risks in their environment. They are commonly used by those that work in rapidly changing and/or high-risk environments or situations. For example, working at height, using power tools, working over deep water or leading a work party.

Conducting a DRA allows the Responsible Person to identify the risks associated with their working environment and establish what they can do to avoid harm to themselves and others. They are designed to complement a formal risk assessment (and safe working procedures), assisting the Responsible Person to identify and control those hazards that could not be reasonably foreseen.

The Trust has a single [DRA form](#) that is adaptable – the level of potential detail required will depend upon the risk profile such as activity, site constraints and circumstances, level of competency of participants etc. The DRA form is designed to lead the Responsible Person through the process and can be used to support task and activity briefings.

**DRAs are always required for work parties / when power tools are used and other significant situations facing the Responsible Person such as when working in higher-risk environments that can change suddenly, making some risks challenging to foresee.**

## 12.2 Responsibilities, Communication, Monitoring & Review

Staff and volunteers need to ensure that they are familiar with the hazards they will encounter, follow relevant instructions, procedures (SWPs) and/or codes of practice and undertake appropriate training as required, to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

If staff or volunteers do not know how to carry out the activity/task safely, they should ask for help from their line manager in the first instance. Training will be provided if necessary.

Undertaking the DRA is the responsibility of the appropriate leader; e.g. for reserve activities, this is likely to be the Warden or the Reserve Officer. The leader also needs to make participants aware of the risk and the precautions to be followed via the safety talk at the beginning of an activity. DRA’s must be returned to Grebe House for review and processing.

Line Managers are responsible for checking and signing off new general risk assessments produced by their staff.

Line managers should monitor the risk assessment process within their areas of responsibility to ensure that the processes are working and they are being applied by their staff and others.

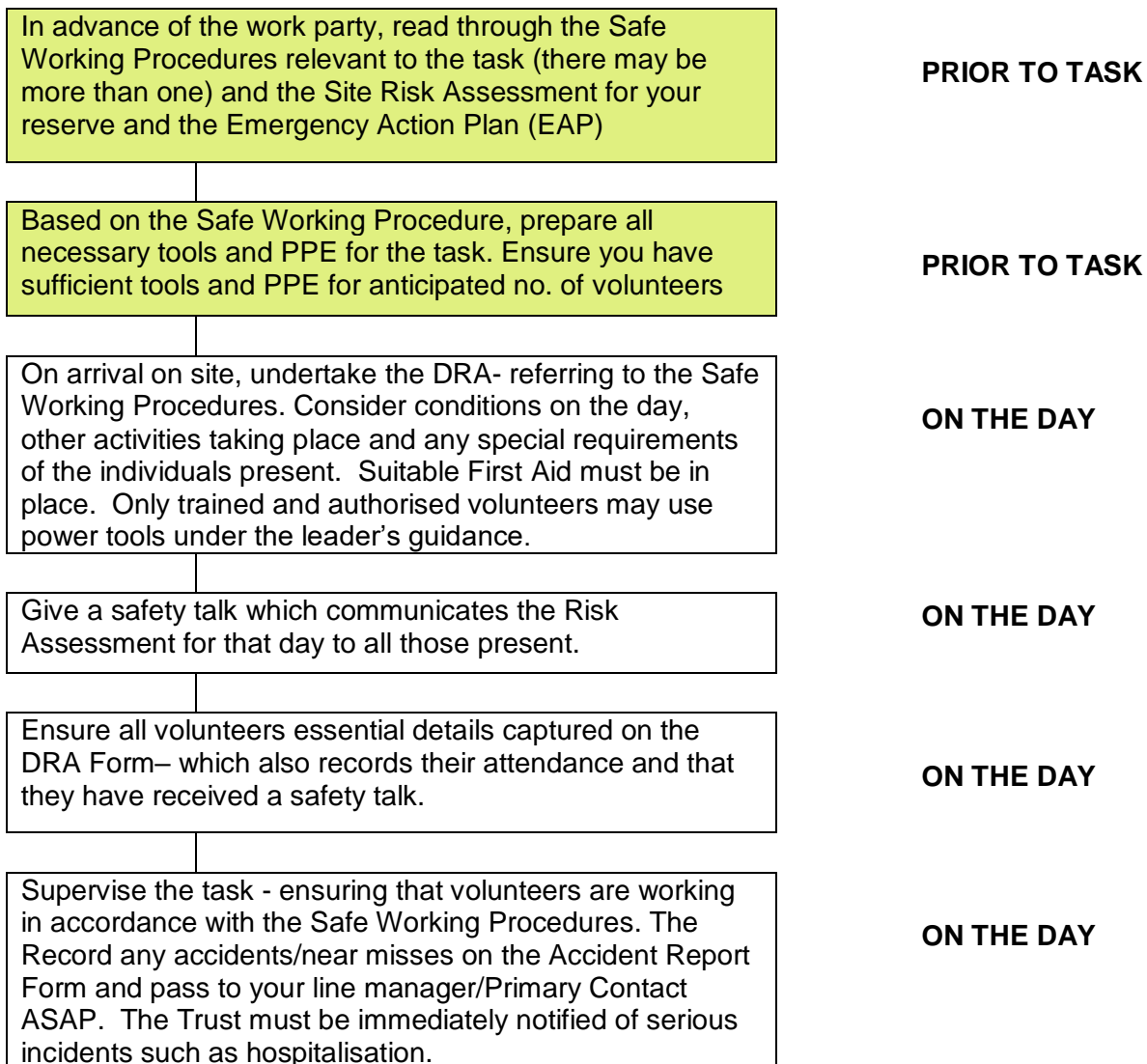
If a site or activity changes, then the risk assessment should be reviewed and amended to reflect the changes. Risk assessments must be reviewed if an accident or near miss occurs. If there are no significant changes, risk assessments should be reviewed periodically. This review should not only include existing risk assessments, but should examine the team's area of work to see if any new risk assessments are required.

All risk assessments and related documents should be stored on the server as follows:

- Nature Reserves Site Risk Assessments [..\Risk Assessments\RA - Nature Reserves](#)
- Emergency Action Plans [..\Emergency Action Plans](#)
- Generic Task Risk Assessments (GRAs) [..\Risk Assessments\RA - Generic task](#)
- Event Risk Assessments [..\17 Events](#)
- Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRAs) [..\Risk Assessments\RA - Dynamic Risk Assessments](#)

In addition, the Safe Working Procedures (SWPs) developed from risk assessment can be found here: [..\Safe Working Procedures](#)

### 12.3 Work parties and safe working: The process to be followed by work party leader



A H&S checklist has been produced as an aid for [Warden Led Work Parties](#).

The Trust has specific guidance for [Working in the Sun and Hot Weather Working](#).

## 13 Health Risks Related to Conservation Work

The Trust will, so far as is reasonably practicable, minimize any risk of infection to staff and others by ensuring sound infection control practices, to reduce the risk of illness and injury resulting from infection. Further details can be found in the Trust's [Infection Control Guidance](#).

### 13.1 Diseases

#### Lyme Disease and other tick-borne diseases (covered by SWP 49)

Lyme disease is a potentially serious bacterial infection transmitted via tick bites. It occurs in the UK, particularly in certain rural areas.

Ticks feed on birds and mammals that carry the bacterium in their blood and then transmit the bacterium to a human when they have a blood meal. The tick needs to be attached to a person for about 24h before the disease can be transmitted. In the UK, the risk of tick bites is highest from April to October, when the ticks are most active.

Ticks are common in forested areas, heathland, moorland and suburban parks, and are more common in certain regions of the UK. Incubation time is 3–30 days. The first symptom is usually a 'bull's eye' rash, which spreads from the site of the tick bite. It is not generally painful or itchy. There are often accompanying flu-like symptoms. In a small number of more serious cases there is infection of the nervous system (symptoms include viral-like meningitis, facial palsy, nerve damage). Anyone with these symptoms who has been in a high-risk area should seek medical attention. Early treatment with antibiotics is generally effective.

#### The following control measures reduce the risk of infection:

- It is important to be 'tick aware' in high risk areas.
- In areas of long grass, wear long trousers tucked in to socks.
- Check exposed skin for ticks (they are very small and therefore difficult to see) and remove immediately with tick tweezers (provided in First Aid kits).
- Check clothing and animals (e.g. working dogs) for ticks.
- Use insect repellents.

#### Weil's Disease or Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis, also called Weil's disease, is an infection you can get from animals. It's rare in the UK. Leptospirosis is spread in the urine of infected animals – most commonly rats, mice, cows, pigs and dogs.

You can get leptospirosis if:

- soil or freshwater (such as water from a river, canal or lake) that contains infected urine gets in your mouth, eyes or a cut
- you touch an infected animal's blood or flesh – usually from working with animals or animal parts

It's very rare to get leptospirosis from pets, other people or bites. The diseases start with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache, which can lead to vomiting and muscle pains and ultimately to jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure. In rare cases the diseases can be fatal.

How can I prevent it?

- Wash cuts and grazes immediately with soap and running water and cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work
- Wash your hands after handling any animal, or any contaminated clothing or other materials and always before eating, drinking or smoking
- Wear protective clothing if you're at risk through your job – this is determined by risk assessment and where necessary documented in relevant Safe Working Procedures
- Shower as soon as possible if you've been in potentially infected water

**Report any illness immediately to you doctor and tell your manager/Primary Contact**

## **Tetanus**

Tetanus is a serious, life-threatening condition caused by bacteria getting into a wound. It's rare in the UK because the tetanus vaccine has been part of the routine vaccination schedule for many years.

There is a risk of tetanus if soil or manure containing bacteria gets into a wound, such as a bite, burn or scratch. Tetanus is rare, but the chances of getting it are higher if:

- you have not been fully vaccinated (the tetanus vaccine has routinely been given since 1961)
- you have a large or deep wound
- the wound is very dirty or there is something stuck in the wound

Check with your GP surgery if you're not sure you've been fully vaccinated against tetanus.

## **Toxicara**

This small parasitic worm is common in dog and cat faeces and can be transferred to humans, particularly children. The developing parasite can cause blindness.

If you come into contact with faeces then ensure hands are washed before eating or drinking.

## **Hepatitis & AIDS**

Although the risk of contracting these is low, the implications are obviously extreme. The most common risk area is through routine litter clearance on reserves; for this reason, stout protective gloves must always be worn for litter clearance. Any syringe needles that are found should be disposed of carefully and safely in a 'sharps bin' or drinks can closed with heavy tape or a screw top jam jar. Disposal bins should be carried by people working on tasks that may bring them into contact with syringes.

Hepatitis can be a significant risk to first aiders or others dealing with, or clearing up after an incident where a quantity of blood has been spilt. Unlike the AIDS virus, hepatitis is not killed off with contact to the air. The first aider should wear latex free gloves when dealing with any incident.

## **Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) – see SWP 80**

OPM caterpillars, or larvae, are covered with thousands of minute, irritating hairs. These can be released as a defence mechanism, or blown off by the wind, and come into contact with people and animals. Contact can cause symptoms ranging from a mildly itching rash to allergic reactions. The caterpillars build communal nests on the trunks and branches of oak trees to protect themselves from predators. Once released, the hairs can persist in the nests and the environment, such as on tree bark or grass, for a year or more, posing a long-term nuisance to people and animals unfortunate enough to come into contact with them.

Contact with the hairs, which contain an urticating (irritating) substance called thaumetopoein, is known to cause a number of conditions, including:

- skin irritation, rashes and itching;
- eye complaints; and
- breathing difficulties

In very rare cases it can cause severe allergic reactions. Some people can become sensitised by repeated exposure to the hairs, meaning that the symptoms become worse with repeated exposure.

## **Other infections**

The Trust has issued specific guidance and briefings on infection hazards as and when necessary such as in the case of **Avian (Bird) Flu** or **Covid** guidance for both office-based and field working.

## **13.2 Hazardous plants**

There are many potentially hazardous plants in the countryside, too numerous to mention here. Most of us are familiar with some species and we all understand that we must not eat any wild plant, fruit or fungi nor encourage others to do so unless we are absolutely sure it is edible. There are

however, some plants which we commonly come across in conservation work which can cause serious and often unexpected concern and these are dealt with here.

### **Wild Parsnip, Giant Hogweed and other Umbellifers**

The sap contains several compounds that when in contact with the human skin and in combination with sun light, cause burning of the skin. Serious swelling of eyes or mouth can also result.

- Ensure that skin is not exposed to both sap and sunlight by wearing appropriate clothing and washing off any sap
- A face shield is important when using a brushcutter
- Eyes or mouth must be rinsed with clean water, and serious swelling must be treated by a doctor.

### **Blue-Green Algal Blooms**

These occur naturally in many inland waters and, in still water, can multiply in the summer and discolour the water green, blue/green or green/brown. During calm weather, the algae can rise to the surface forming a scum-like green paint and this can be blown around on the surface.

Sometimes they can release toxins into the water. Illnesses include skin rashes, eye irritation, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and pains in muscles and joints.

- You must avoid contact with the scum or water close to it.

### **Blackthorn and other thorns**

Blackthorn is very common and every year many Trust staff and volunteers are involved in coppicing it. The thorns are extremely sharp, tend to break off in the skin and are notorious for causing a septic wound. They can cause potentially serious eye injuries

- Reduce the risk of injuries by wearing appropriate gloves and other clothing
- Thorns should be removed and in serious cases ensure you seek medical assistance.  
Please note – First aiders should not try to remove splinters or thorns from other people, as it is not covered by their training.

### **Bracken**

Bracken is poisonous if ingested, and bracken spores have recently been identified as a possible risk to human health if inhaled.

- Do not carry out cutting of bracken once the spores are mature.

### **Ragwort**

- Humans may be at risk from ragwort poisoning through direct contact (e.g. hand pulling) or the consumption of contaminated food. Livestock and other animals may be poisoned by ingesting ragwort. Wear gloves, long sleeves and wash hands thoroughly before eating or drinking
- A ready supply of gloves should be available so they can be changed before sap soaks through the material.

## **13.3 Venomous Animals**

### **Adder**

Adder bites to humans are not common and are rarely fatal, but fright resulting in shock is common.

- You must caution people and take steps to avoid adders
- You must not under-estimate the seriousness of an adder bite

In the event of an adder bite;

- Remain calm and do not panic. Snake bites, particularly those that occur in the UK, are rarely serious and very rarely fatal.
- Keep the part of your body that has been bitten as still as possible because this will prevent the venom spreading around your body. You may want to secure the bitten body part with a sling (a supportive bandage) or a splint (a rigid support that helps keep the body part stable). However, do not make the sling or splint so tight that it restricts your blood flow.

- Remove any jewellery and watches from the bitten limb because they could cut into your skin if the limb swells. However, do not attempt to remove any clothing, such as trousers.
- Seek immediate medical attention

### Bees and Wasps

For most people one or two bee or wasp stings are a painful but short-lived problem. A small number of people are however hyper-sensitive to such stings, usually bee stings. Even one sting can cause very rapid and extreme swelling, particularly if the person is stung on the head or close to a blood vessel. The person is usually aware of their sensitivity and would know the very urgent need for treatment by a doctor. Where appropriate they should make this known. For example to a work party leader / first aiders.

## 13.4 Livestock

The Trust is increasingly using livestock to manage nature reserves, with the result that more staff, volunteers and members of the public are coming into contact with grazing animals.

The Trust tries to ensure that all of its livestock are of a normally calm temperament and familiar with human interaction. However, all stock present potential hazards, with the risk often increasing with the size and weight of the animal. To ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and the public, the Trust undertakes to;

- Provide adequate training to all staff and volunteers involved in livestock handling
- Provide suitable handling structures and facilities for the various tasks that are required when keeping livestock
- Ensure that people never work alone when handling livestock
- Provide and maintain effective boundary fencing to prevent livestock straying
- Erect suitable signs to inform the public of the presence of livestock on reserves, especially when bulls\* or cows with calves are present
- Assess the risks associated with all livestock activities, and to act upon the findings
- Remove aggressive animals where necessary

\* The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits bulls of recognised dairy breeds in all circumstances from being at large in fields crossed by Public Rights of Way. Bulls of all other breeds are also banned from such fields unless accompanied by cows or heifers. A suitable bull sign should be triangular with a yellow background and a black band around the outside. A bull or bull's head should be shown (black on yellow) on the sign, with supplementary text such as 'bull in field' if desired. Text should not suggest that the bull is aggressive, threatening or dangerous (i.e. avoid 'beware' or 'danger').

The main risk from handling sheep is from manual handling injuries. Tasks associated with sheep and other livestock are covered by the following SWPs:

- SWP 20: Foot trimming
- SWP21: Ear Tagging
- SWP22: Dagging
- SWP48: Rounding up sheep
- SWP 77: Livestock checking

The risks from veterinary medicines (including pesticides) should be considered. These should be handled as per the Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines SWP 81.

Sheep may also transmit **orf** to their handlers: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/orf/>

This is a painless ulcerative skin lesion which heals within 6 to 8 weeks without treatment. No specific precautions are necessary beyond normal hygiene procedures. These should also be in place to prevent oral transmission of such organisms as E.Coli. Pregnant staff should be excluded from contact with pregnant ewes to avoid risks associated with Ovine chlamydiosis (Enzootic abortion).



If you are visiting another landowner's site that has livestock, it is advisable to check with the owner/farm manager as to the possible presence of cows with calves, bulls or other potentially aggressive animals (stallions, pigs etc).

Avoid touching dead animals or birds. If essential, use waterproof gauntlets or an implement such as a stick to turn the corpse over.

### **13.5 Dusts and other hazardous substances**

Working in conservation means that people can come into contact with a range of dusts, vapours, fumes and mould spores or germs that have the potential to cause serious lung diseases, such as occupational asthma, farmers' lung and chronic bronchitis.

While the majority of work is undertaken outside with good levels of ventilation, it is important to be aware of the need to protect against breathing in dust, especially in the following situations:

- using a substance where the product label indicates it can give off harmful fumes, vapours or dusts e.g. cement
- in enclosed spaces where ventilation is poor e.g. sanding wood in the workshop
- clearing old straw, hay or wood chippings where fungal spores can be given off

Suitable CE / UKCA marked respirators (dust masks) should be used if there is a risk of breathing in harmful dusts. These come in three levels of protection FFP1, FFP2 and FFP3, the higher the number, the greater the level of protection. The HSE recommends people use FFP3 respirators if they are likely to come into contact with high levels of fungal spores.

These respirators differ from the cheap "comfort" dust masks available at many DIY stores, which offer very little protection and should not be used in the work place.

*Note: FFP – Filtering Facepiece*

## **14 Hazardous Substances**

### **14.1 COSHH Chemical Substances**

A hazardous substance is one that has the potential to cause harm to the health of anyone who comes into contact with it. These substances (manufactured or natural) come in many forms including, gases, vapours, fumes, dusts, liquids, powders, pastes or solids. They can potentially enter the body via inhalation, swallowing, absorbed through the skin or eyes or via open wounds. The term "hazardous substances" also covers biological agents that may be encountered at work, e.g. bacteria, fungi or viruses.

COSHH applies to virtually all substances hazardous to health except asbestos, lead, radiation and biological agents outside the employer's control e.g. catching an infection from a colleague.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), provide the legal framework for controlling exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace. It requires employers to prevent or adequately control the exposure of their employees and other persons who may be affected to hazardous substances. In addition, the Regulations require the maintenance, examination and testing of control measures; the provision of information; instruction and training; emergency planning (procedures to deal with accidents, incidents and emergencies); and, in some cases, exposure monitoring and health surveillance of employees.

The Trust has written COSHH Risk Assessment Guidance and for Storage of Hazardous Substances

### **14.2 Biocides/pesticides (Chemical hazards in reserve management)**

This should be read in conjunction with the Trust's procedures on the Use of Biocides.

Chemicals are infrequently used on Trust reserves to control the growth of unwanted plants, such as invasive species or scrub re-growth.

Anyone using biocides on behalf of the Trust must have a certificate of competence from the relevant authority [NPTC / C&G Level 2 Safe Use and Application of Pesticides PA1 & PA6 Hand Held Application] and will therefore have been trained in safe use and handling to industry recognised standards. In all cases the health and safety information given on the biocide container and the COSHH assessment for the product must be adhered to at all times.

Any chemical supplied to the Trust will have a hazard schedule and recommended procedures for its safe use. The purchaser is responsible for ensuring the schedule and recommended safe use is made available from the COSHH risk assessment and staff using the materials are briefed. The responsible person (Nature Reserves Manager or their designate) must ensure that the relevant procedures are followed.

In management of nature reserves chemicals include:

- Pesticides, herbicides, timber treatment, tree paints, paint, cement, WD 40, lubricants, cleaning fluids and gels.

Use of some chemicals requires a certificate of competence. This includes pesticides (See SWP41: Pesticides). The use of certain chemicals may also require the consent of Natural England (or the landowner) and the Environment Agency, if the activity is near water.

### **Preparation**

- Dilution and mixing of the product must take place as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- A visor and pesticide resistant gloves must be worn as a minimum.
- Mixing should be done on a raised surface to allow accurate measuring and away from thoroughfares, in a well-ventilated area.

### **Transportation**

- Pesticides must be sealed in a leak-proof container, clearly labelled and placed inside a transport box
- The transport box must be signed with all the relevant hazard decals
- The transport box should be firmly anchored in the vehicle away from the passenger compartment to prevent tilting or sliding

### **Application**

- Herbicides should be applied in a way that will use least amount of chemical and minimize waste
- Factors including public access, spray drift, and livestock restrictions must be considered
- Signs should be placed around the treated area to warn members of the public after chemical use

### **Storage**

- Pesticides must be stored in their original container with all labels intact
- Pesticides must be stored in a locked structure robust enough to withstand foreseeable impacts and fire for 30 minutes
- Storage units must have a holding capacity greater than the volume of chemical stored within it and be leak proof
- All relevant warning signs must be displayed on the storage unit and it must be locked when not in use

### **Disposal**

- Dilute chemicals, where they cannot be used on site, must be disposed of in a safe area away from water courses and drains
- Containers must be disposed of as per the label instructions

## Record Keeping

- Records of disposal and application sites must be kept
- Application records must include chemical used, volume, concentration and exact location, not just reserve name
- A complete list of the chemicals held in an area and approximate quantities must be recorded and kept with the fire register for use by the emergency services

## Spillage

- Cordon off area with visible tape or other barrier to prevent pedestrian access to spillage.
- Move livestock out of the field or prevent their access to spillage.
- Contact the Environment Agency.
- Inform your Line Manager
- Follow COSHH instructions to clean up spillage.

## 14.3 Chemicals used in the office

This includes office materials such as cleaning materials. Ensure that as a user, you read and follow the COSHH instructions supplied (safety data sheet). If you purchase any new chemicals, details need to be added to the COSHH files and information made available to all users.

## 14.4 Other hazardous items

<b>Infected and discarded hypodermic needles</b> (See SWP12: Litter and the <a href="#">Trust's Infection Control Guidance</a> )	If there is an urgent need to make an area safe the needles can be handled BUT WITH CARE AND THE RIGHT PRECAUTIONS. However, in the first instance contact the District Council. Usual advice is to wear heavy leather gloves, to pick up the needles with forceps or litter pickers. The needles should be placed in a screw cap jam jar, an approved sharps box or failing this they are put into an empty drink can that can be sealed with heavy tape. These operations must be done with utmost care.  Collection of sharps boxes is arranged by Business Support.  <b>NEEDLE STICK INJURIES ARE DANGEROUS.</b>  Following such an injury, the injured person MUST go to the local A& E department as soon as possible for treatment and advice. This must be reported as an accident to the Trust.
<b>Fly tipping/ Burnt-out Cars</b>	There are dangers from corrosive materials and toxic gases when handling burnt-out cars. These are becoming more frequently found on sites. Specialist advice should be sought. SWP12
<b>Exhaust Fumes</b>	Care must be taken when using petrol driven machines, particularly when there is limited airflow.
<b>Asbestos</b>	If asbestos is suspected, specialist advice should be sought before taking any action.

## 15 Working Alone

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those who work by

themselves without close or direct supervision.

This can be split into two main groups:

- People who work in fixed establishments e.g. office-based including those located on non-Trust premises
- Remote Workers working away from fixed base e.g. Reserves Officers, Wildlife and Conservation Officers and key volunteers

There is no specific legislation for lone working and working alone is not in itself against the law, but it is recognised that lone working can create additional risks. Legislation which applies to employees who work alone includes the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. These require employers to appropriately assess and manage any health and safety risks for people working alone. If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements need to be put in place.

The Trust has a [Lone Working Policy](#) and subordinate arrangements. In the context of the Trust *lone workers* includes volunteers who undertake agreed activities on their own whilst volunteering for the Trust.

### **15.1 Classifications of lone workers**

To assist in determining the level of risk, lone workers have been categorised into two groups:

Category 1 – Low/Medium

- Office based staff and volunteers, home working, staff who occasionally work remotely

Category 2 – Higher Risk Staff

- Primarily field based and peripatetic, outdoor volunteer roles where the individual is alone including engagement staff

Focus will be given to higher profile lone working activities but not at the expense of those which are judged to be of a lower risk profile.

### **15.2 Prohibition of lone working**

There are certain tasks and activities, due to their higher-risk profile and consequences should they go wrong, that the Trust has prohibited from undertaking alone:

- Work with chainsaws
- Use of any winches
- Bonfires
- Working on or near water where waders or chest waders are required or where there is fast flowing water or steep banks / drops or it is awkward to access safely
- Work at height including on ladders, mobile elevated platforms, abseiling and roof work
- Investigating incidents or situations where confrontation/danger can reasonably be expected
- Situations involving potentially aggressive people and/or animals
- Work on or immediately adjacent to public roads, railways, powerlines, gas pipes or similar infrastructure
- potentially unstable geology or structures
- Work on cliff or quarry faces or where risk of falling rocks
- Work on derelict buildings or dilapidated structures
- Work in excavations
- Work that involves handling livestock

Lone working should not occur on any task or activity where the risk assessment indicates that it should be prohibited. Where lone working is considered acceptable, the Lone Working Procedure must be followed. The Trust actively supports staff and volunteers who lone work to proactively raise any concerns they have via their line manager or primary contact.

### **15.3 Lone Working Procedures**

Line managers must conduct general risk assessments of lone working activities using the Trust's risk assessment procedures. In practice lone working hazards will normally be considered through the Trust's systems of task-based risk assessments and procedures etc. It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that all identified control measures are in place and that the employees are confident in their application and use prior to commencing lone working. Monitoring must be in place.

The Trust has a specific procedure for Lone Working and Personal Safety at Grebe House and the Annex including a procedure for the Grebe House panic alarm.

### **15.4 The Buddy System**

Each individual (including volunteers) within the Trust should normally belong to a buddy group. It will be decided within each team and agreed by the responsible manager, how the buddy system will be implemented. This can be through a text message rota, telephone calls or a WhatsApp or Teams group. It is important that the system in place is robust and fit for all members of the group to use. It should be regularly monitored. There may be times where it is necessary to set up temporary groups such as during periods of seasonal or other absence.

The lone worker and their buddy must understand the agreed escalation process in an emergency or where contact cannot be established in a reasonable time – see *below*.

The Trust has detailed guidance on the lone worker buddy system with a buddy system template.

### **15.5 Escalation Procedure**

If you are someone's Buddy, then it is your responsibility to take action if they do not return or call in on time. It is your responsibility to ensure that your nominated buddy is familiar with the procedure to follow if you do not return or call.

It is important that employees and volunteers keep their personal contact information at the Trust up to date, including an emergency contact (close family or friend). All personal data will be held in line with the Trust's data protection protocols.

Line managers are responsible for regularly checking their team members understand the agreed procedure and that they follow it. It is recommended that the lone working buddy is a colleague who understands the nature of the lone worker's job role. Managers must be satisfied of the appropriateness where staff nominate a non-colleague as a buddy. What's most important is that they're immediately available throughout the duration of the worker's day including out of normal working hours where necessary.

The Trust has a flowchart detailing the escalation procedure for missing lone workers including volunteers.

## **16 Public Engagement**

### **16.1 Public Events**

The Trust runs a wide programme of activities where we invite the public to visit our reserves and project sites. They can range in size from fairly small events such as a guided walk to large open days where there are a large number of visitors and external exhibitors. As this is such a diverse area of work, there is no one standard approach to managing health and safety. However, there are some common themes to be considered:

- Where events are held on land which isn't under the control of the Trust, all appropriate permissions and associated health and safety requirements should be satisfied well ahead of the event.

- A suitable risk assessment must be carried out well in advance of the event to ensure that all the hazards are identified and suitable controls are put in place. Roles should be clearly identified and staff informed of the findings. The risk assessment should be reviewed on the day of the event, allowing time to address any newly found risks.
- Adequate first aid and welfare arrangements are in place to deal with the anticipated number of staff and attendees.
- Plans are in place to deal with any emergency, i.e. fire procedures, liaison with emergency services.
- Staff are suitably trained to undertake the tasks that are asked of them, i.e. manual handling, erection of marquees, traffic control, etc...
- Vehicle movements must be planned to avoid collisions, especially with pedestrians. Wherever possible, ensure motor vehicle movements and people are kept separate. With large events, liaison with the Police may be required to manage traffic on public roads. Where events are held on land which isn't under the control of the Trust vehicle use should follow guidance/policy of the relevant owner/manager.
- Any external contractors must be able to demonstrate that they are competent to carry out their role, and where necessary have the appropriate level of insurance cover and training, e.g. food sellers have the appropriate food safety training and ability to store food safely.

The Trust has developed a [toolkit for managing events](#) including:

*Event Management Plan Template*

*First Aid for Events*

*Fire Risk Assessment Templates for Events*

*Extreme Weather Guidance*

*Event Safety Checklist [lower risk profile events]*

## 16.2 Guided Walks

Taking people on a guided walk is an excellent way of introducing them to conservation, wildlife or a new site. However, they may have no experience of the countryside, of walking any distance, or of the kind of terrain. As a leader you are responsible for their welfare as well as their enjoyment of the walk. All walk leaders should be registered Trust volunteers or staff.

When advertising a walk, indicate what clothing and footwear would be suitable, how strenuous or how long the walk will be and whether it is suitable for all abilities. Be prepared to cancel a walk if the weather could make it hazardous or particularly tiring as well as unpleasant.

By following these basic precautions, you can ensure that everyone's walk is safe as well as enjoyable.

- Where events are held on land which isn't under the control of the Trust, all appropriate permissions and associated health and safety requirements should be satisfied well ahead of the walk.
- Risk assessment must be carried out well in advance of the event to ensure that all the hazards are identified and suitable controls are put in place. The risk assessment should be reviewed on the day of the event, allowing time to address any newly found risks as part of the Trust's dynamic risk assessment procedure. The Trust has a generic risk assessment for guided walks which can be adapted where necessary.
- Adequate first aid and welfare arrangements are in place to deal with the anticipated number of staff and attendees.
- Inspect the site first and plan your walk including stopping places.
- Note the location of any hazards and mobile phone coverage.
- When giving instructions at the start or during the walk, make sure that everyone is gathered round and can hear you.
- Warn of any hazards at the start and again before people reach them, e.g. slippery slopes, overhanging branches, poisonous plants or fungi, or plants known to cause reactions if touched, e.g. giant hogweed.

- Take an appropriately stocked Events Bag with First Aid Kit and make sure it is readily and quickly accessible.
- Walk at a pace appropriate to the group to ensure any participants are not left behind. Count your walkers at the start and check numbers during the course of the walk.
- Ideally have an assistant bringing up the rear
- Watch for signs of tiredness and if necessary shorten the route or take rest breaks.

While most guided walks are low risk activities, there are certain circumstances where the risks are increased:

- Towpaths / alongside waterways/waterbodies – avoid standing too close to the edge
- Roads – wherever possible try to plan walks to avoid having to walk on the road. Additional action may be required if road walking is unavoidable, i.e. high visibility tabards.
- Livestock – walks should not enter land where livestock (cattle, horses) are present without considering any additional controls as part of the ongoing dynamic risk assessment process.

See SWP45: Guided Walks. This should be supplied to people organising such activities.

### **16.3 Leading a Practical Work Party**

The tasks undertaken on Trust reserves are extremely varied and involve many volunteers of widely differing abilities. The Work Party leader has overall responsibility for the choice and organisation of the task in consultation with the Senior Reserves/Project Officer but the leader must emphasise that each person has a responsibility to look after their own health and safety.

#### **Planning the task**

- Visit the site in advance or be familiar with it
- Plan the work in advance
- Arrange the appropriate level of first aid cover, and ensure a suitable fully stocked first aid kit is available
- Be aware of the nearest telephone, or place with mobile reception and Accident and Emergency Unit – see the site Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
- Ensure that any tools are in good condition and carry out pre-use checks
- Explain the importance of appropriate clothing in advance, e.g. footwear, thorn-proof gloves, clothes which will not snag

#### **At the start of work**

- Ensure the prepared risk assessment is appropriate for the task and that there have been no significant changes since it was produced, i.e. adverse weather conditions
- Complete the dynamic risk assessment
- Implement any actions from the risk assessment, e.g. set up warning signs, barrier tape
- Explain the proper use of tools and provide any appropriate training
- Explain the objectives of the task and allocate tasks according to abilities
- Explain any other significant findings of the risk assessment to everyone involved
- Provide work gloves or other protective clothing as required.

#### **During work**

- Monitor safe working distances and practices, and remind people if there are breaches
- Ensure that people do not become overtired or thirsty
- Stop people if they are working in an unsafe manner
- Instruct any latecomers properly
- Encourage rest periods

#### **At the end of the task**

- Ensure the task is complete or safe to leave
- Check the tools and equipment for any necessary repairs, anything that cannot be repaired immediately should be taken out of circulation and marked as inoperable until it is fixed
- Encourage people by thanking them for their help.

Although aimed at Volunteer Wardens the following [checklist provides a useful aid memoire for leading a practical work party](#)

## 16.4 Working with Children, Young People and Adults at Risk

Any Trust member of staff, or anyone taking responsibility for children and adults at risk on behalf of the Trust, must refer to the Safeguarding Children Policy and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

### Selection of Education Staff and Watch Leaders

Employees and volunteers of the Trust who are likely to take sole responsibility for children should be carefully assessed for their suitability.

- They should be interviewed to assess their suitability for working with children
- Two references should be obtained, one of which relates to the person's ability to work with children
- They will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) , asked to sign up to the Update Service, and to sign a declaration stating that they have not had any convictions which may affect their ability to work with children
- They should be given thorough training and instruction (e.g. by shadowing and through induction)

### Risk assessment

Staff or volunteers responsible for children at any of our reserves and third party sites should have in place procedures specific to their situation as identified by risk assessments.

### General Principles

- You should visit the site in advance to plan the activity and carry out a risk assessment
- Send appropriate safety information to visiting group leaders in advance with a booking form and ask them to complete and sign it
- Strongly encourage leaders of visiting groups to visit the site in advance and complete their own risk assessment
- Ensure adequate adult / child supervision ratios, bearing in mind the activity planned, the site, weather and particular children involved.
- The following supervision ratios should be followed (based on Kent WT)
  - 1:3 for pre-school and Reception children (aged 0-5 years)
  - 1:5 for children in years 1-3 (aged 5-8 years)
  - 1:10 for children in years 4-6 (aged 8-11 years)
  - 1:15 for years 7+ (aged 11 years upwards)
- Try to make sure there are at least three adults with **any** size group – and that one adult is never alone with a single child (or adult at risk)
- Make sure that you or the leader of a visiting group knows how many children and adults you have and who they are. (Trust staff should at all times wear an HMWT identity badge)
- Check numbers of children at regular intervals during the session
- Make sure that you or the leader of a visiting group knows about any relevant health or additional needs of any of those in the group
- Record on the booking form any unusual risks associated with a particular group
- Know the location of the nearest telephone, mobile phone coverage and nearest Accident & Emergency Unit
- Make sure that an adequate First Aid Kit is available
- Make sure that you have the name of the group's nominated First Aider
- Be aware that children may have allergies to some creams, medicines, etc... and that you should **not** administer these to children or anyone else



- Start the activity by explaining rules of behaviour. Tell the children how to ensure they and their friends remain safe!
- Ensure safe going home procedures are followed

#### **You should:**

- Organise a structured and action-packed programme – bored children can get themselves into scrapes!
- Ensure the task is suitable for the ability of the participants
- Arrange an alternative programme in case there is bad weather or other difficulties or emergency
- Try to make activities accessible to all, including students with English as a second language or a physical impairment
- Give clear roles and responsibilities to all assistants
- Ensure wildlife sites and species are not damaged

A monitoring process will be used to ensure that safety procedures are being carried out

### **16.5 Children, Young People and Adults at Risk on Practical Conservation Work**

There are extra risks to children, young people and adults at risk who are involved in practical work. Because of this, the law places a duty on the Trust specifically to assess the risks to young people. This assessment should consider:

- inexperience, immaturity and lack of hazard awareness of young people
- lack of physical development leading to increased risk from manual handling or physically demanding tasks
- the design of tools and work equipment (cutting edges, too large or heavy)
- appropriately sized personal protective clothing and safety equipment
- straying into exclusion zones around other workers
- prohibited tools, substances or work activities
- practical work away from nature reserves (e.g. in school grounds) may present lower risks, but these should still be assessed and appropriate precautions taken.

#### **Insurance**

Children under 16 years on volunteering tasks must be accompanied by a responsible adult and kept away from power tool operations.

#### **Supervision**

Children and teenagers need to be adequately supervised by responsible adults. The ratio will depend on the age of the children / teenagers, the nature of the task and the tools being used. Some situations will need one-to-one supervision; others will be unsuitable for children altogether.

Children should only be asked to use tools or carry out work which is within their own strength and capability. They should not carry tools which they are not allowed to use, and prohibited tools should be kept out of reach of the children (preferably in a locked vehicle).

The safety talk before starting work should be tailored to include all the normal safety information, but in a way that is understandable by the target age group.

#### **Tool age limits**

The age limits given below are for guidance. In some situations where the child is participating in a structured learning programme with a high level of direct supervision, such as *Forest Schools*, the tool age limits may be varied.

- 5-8 years: generally, only low risk tools such as hand trowels
- Ages 8+: include spades, forks, pitchforks, hammers, rakes, screwdrivers, loppers and bowsaws. Some of these (e.g. loppers, pitchforks and bowsaws) will require a greater degree of supervision

- Ages 16+: carry or use “swinging” edged tools and certain fencing equipment (e.g. bill hook, slasher, axe, post driver, sledge hammer, post maul and mell or wire strainer)
- No-one under 18 years may operate a power tool e.g. brushcutter, hedge trimmer, chainsaw etc.

## 17 Motor Vehicles

### 17.1 Road Vehicles

The Trust has vehicles including vans and cars which are driven by Trust staff. These drivers are likely to be very familiar with their vehicles but it's important not to overlook the risks. The following SWPs relate to motor vehicles:

- SWP 6: Driving on highway
- SWP 7: Driving off-road
- SWP 8: Working near public roads
- SWP35: Trailers
- SWP36: Working with roof racks

### Licence Entitlements

Driving Licence Categories can be found on the UK government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/driving-licence-categories>

Nature Reserves' and Wider Countryside officers are trained in the use of trailers and towing, either by having passed the official towing test with the DVLA before it was discontinued or through completion of training with certificate since the discontinuation of the formal test.

### 17.2 Driver responsibilities:

- Take responsibility for the keys of the vehicle and for its safe parking
- Ensure that the vehicle has a current MOT, insurance and tax disc. (Insurance details are available from Trust headquarters) – one member of Reserves team leads on this for vehicles under their control. There is an Engagement Vehicle looked after by that team.
- Maintain a log book which records:
  - Details of each journey (date, destination, purpose, mileage, driver)
  - Maintenance checks (radiator, oil, windscreen wipers, windscreen washers, lights and tyres)
- Ensure appropriate servicing and repair of any faults
- Grant permission to other drivers only if the proposed driver is:
  - Over 18 years of age and holds a valid driving licence
  - Has completed a short informal training run of at least 4 miles to the satisfaction
  - Has accepted full responsibility for the vehicle and that they themselves are satisfied with their own ability to drive the vehicle and with its road worthiness

**Trust vehicles and trailers are subject to a schedule of formal documented checks.**

### 17.3 What to do in the event of an accident

Your first concern must be whether anybody is injured and how to deal with this.

If someone is injured you must immediately call the emergency services. In any event you must exchange the following details or report these details to the police within 24 hours. You don't need to report a collision to the police if you've exchanged details, nobody was injured and there are no allegations of driving offences. You must report the collision to the police if you were unable to exchange details at the scene, if anyone was injured, or if you suspect that the other person may have committed a driving offence.”

- Your name

- The registration number and make of the Trust vehicle
- The registered office of the Trust: Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, St Michael's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL3 4SN
- Trust insurance company

You must take similar details from the other driver and report these together with a plan of the accident to the Trust headquarters. Take as many details as possible including photographic evidence of damage where appropriate.

**You must report the accident to the Head of Business Support and Health and Safety Manager straightaway.**

#### **17.4 Using your own vehicle on Trust business**

If you are using your own vehicle on Trust business, you must ensure that your vehicle is fit to drive, has an MOT, insurance and is taxed. If you are employed by the Trust you must ensure that your insurance does cover you for business use. Staff can claim mileage for using their vehicle for business, providing they can evidence they comply with the above"

The Trust undertakes annual compliance checks and on joining for both use of Trust Vehicles and private vehicle use where necessary.

#### **17.5 Transporting tools**

If possible, tools should be transported in a separate compartment of the vehicle or in a trailer and sharp tools should be well secured in bags or covers.

**Remember:** Loose objects in a vehicle's compartment can cause serious injury or even death to the driver or passengers in the event of a collision.

### **18 Manual Handling, Lifting and Carrying**

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) define manual handling as: *"...any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or bodily force"*

A load is a moveable object, such as a box or package, a person or an animal, or something being pushed or pulled, such as a pallet truck or wheelbarrow.

Manual handling injuries are part of a wider group of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The term 'musculoskeletal disorders' includes injuries and conditions that can cause pain to the back, joints and limbs. Heavy manual labour, repetitive handling, awkward postures and previous or existing injuries or conditions are all risk factors for developing MSDs.

The Manual Handling Regulations set out a clear hierarchy of measures you must follow to prevent and manage the risks from hazardous manual handling:

- avoid hazardous manual handling operations, 'so far as reasonably practicable'
- assess the risk of injury to workers from any hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided
- reduce the risk of injury to workers from hazardous manual handling to as low as reasonably practicable

The Trust has a Guidance and Procedure for Manual Handling Risk Assessment with a specific Manual Handling Risk Assessment Template, good practice guidance for Manual Handling Techniques and further resources.

Handling of sheep during routine flock management (e.g. foot trimming, shearing) requires a lot of manual effort. Consider recommended methods for limiting the risk of musculoskeletal injury. [See SWPs 20, 21 and 22]

## 19 Work Stations and Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

Under the Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations, employers are required to provide a healthy and safe environment which includes minimising the risks associated with the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE).

The use of DSE is not generally a high-risk activity, but failure to meet the minimum requirements set out in the regulations can lead to musculoskeletal problems, eye strain, fatigue or mental stress. These problems can be overcome by good ergonomic design of equipment and furniture, a good working environment and careful planning of the tasks performed.

The Trust has a specific Policy for Display Screen Equipment and further subordinate guidance:

- *Working Safely with DSE*
- *Working Safely with Laptops and other Portable Devices*
- *DSE Risk Assessment Template (Office Working)*

The Trust has an eLearning DSE module which all Users of DSE are required to complete at induction. In addition, the Trust has a Homeworking eLearning module which all staff who work from home are required to complete along with an online Homeworking Risk Assessment.

## 20 Work Equipment

Equipment used at work for a variety of purposes can pose a number of risks to both users of the equipment and to others in the vicinity of work being carried out. The Provision and Use of Workplace Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998 was introduced to reduce and control the risks to health and safety from work equipment. The regulations cover the operation of work equipment including starting and stopping, programming, setting, transporting, repairing, modifying, maintaining, servicing and cleaning work equipment.

Although PUWER applies to all lifting equipment, the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) provide more detailed information about the specific hazards and risks associated with lifting equipment and lifting operations.

The definition of work equipment is extremely wide. The associated legislation covers pretty much any piece of equipment that a person is given to carry out their work. This ranges from office equipment and hand tools, through to machinery such as chainsaws and vehicles.

The following principles for safe usage apply to all work equipment:

- It must be **suitable** for the purpose it is used for
- It must be **maintained** in an efficient condition and working order. High risk equipment should have a detailed maintenance log, e.g. chainsaws, brushcutters, vehicles, etc...
- It must be **inspected** by competent persons at suitable intervals or after accidents or incidents
- Adequate information, instruction and training must be given to the operator or user and their supervisor, covering safe usage, the risks and their control measures

The Trust has a specific Policy for Work Equipment including Lifting Equipment.

### 20.1 Power Tools

The Trust uses a wide range of power tools to carry out its work. Safe Working Procedures, the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the training needed to operate the tools is set out in the generic Task Risk Assessment and associated Safe Working Procedures including:

- SWP1: Chainsaw felling
- SWP2: Chainsaw crosscutting
- SWP3: Brushcutter

All power tool operators must be over 18 years old, trained to an agreed standard as specified by the Trust and must not use power tools when their mental or physical condition might impede its safe use. Operators must never operate a power tool if under the influence of drugs or intoxicants. **Volunteers must be explicitly authorised by the Trust for use of all power tools. Volunteers must also meet the same standards as Trust staff. The Trust reserves the right to withdraw permission based upon reasonable precaution.**

### **Noise and vibration**

Due to the nature of power tools, the vast majority of them produce noise and vibration. Both can be harmful above certain levels. The Trust is careful to select power tools that are designed to reduce these hazards as far as is reasonably practical. Where the operator of the tool exceeds safe working time limit on more than an occasional basis, additional controls such as limiting the time of exposure will be required.

Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRAs) must be completed where power tools are used. Where a safe working time limit (as per the tools label) is exceeded this must be recorded.

### **Chainsaws**

Due to the higher level of risk associated with chainsaws and tree work, the Trust closely controls how this work is carried out. Details of the level of competency required for various chainsaw tasks are included in the relevant Safe Working Procedures.

The Trust does not allow any of its staff or volunteers to use a chainsaw off the ground/ aerially/ where climbing is required', or while working alone. The Trust has a very limited number of authorised volunteer chainsaw users and as set out in the Trusts Work Equipment Policy no more volunteers will be authorised to operate chainsaws.

Your chainsaw training equips you to assess how you should handle each job and whether you can complete a task safely. Your professional view of this is important and valuable. You should not undertake tasks that give you concern. If there is a tree that causes you concern, feel free to discuss it with a more experienced colleague or directly with your line manager. You should only work within the limits of your Ticket and your confidence. Where necessary, the Trust routinely engages external contractors to carry out tasks requiring skills that are not available within the Trust.

## **20.2 Electrical power tools**

It's important that electrical power tools are properly maintained and used to avoid the risk of electric shock.

- Inspect the power tool before operation to ensure that the flex and casing aren't damaged
- Read and understand the manual for the particular power tool you are about to use
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment as described in the SWP
- Ensure that the power tool is correct for its intended use (i.e. do not use a 240 volt power tool outdoors)
- Ensure that bystanders are at a safe distance
- If drilling or breaking up ground, make sure that there are no services such as electricity, gas or fibre optic cables in the affected area
- If drilling or using other power tools with moving parts, ensure that you are not wearing any loose clothing and that long hair is securely tied back
- To reduce the risk of electrocution, it is advisable to use a power breaker (Residual Current Device)

- Always unplug an electrical power tool before carrying out any maintenance work
- If using an extension lead, make sure it is correctly rated for the load

### **Operating electrical power tools outdoors**

Always consider whether there is an alternative to using power tools outdoors. It may be safer to use air, hydraulic or hand operated tools.

- To reduce the risk of electric shock, only use cordless power tools or 110 volt tools outside
- Never use electrical tools in damp or rainy conditions
- Remember that tools used outdoors may be at a greater risk from “wear and tear”, so may require more regular inspection and repair.

## **20.3 Hand tools**

It's not possible to go into detail here on the correct usage of all hand tools. People using these tools must feel confident in how to use the tool correctly and of the correct safety checks.

- New staff and volunteers must be instructed in the safe use of hand tools. They should be closely supervised until they can demonstrate that they are competent with the tool
- Safe working practices and distances must be highlighted in any tool talks and maintained throughout the working day

### **Safety checks and maintenance**

- When using hand tools, you must make sure the tool you are using is in a safe condition.
- Correct maintenance and storage help keep the tools in good condition
- Tools should be checked as follows:
  - Tool is firmly fixed to handle
  - Handle is undamaged: no splinters or cracks
  - Blade is undamaged: look for cracks and chips
- Tools should be maintained as follows:
  - Oil metal if stored for long periods
  - Oil wooden handle with linseed
  - Protect blade

### **Using and transporting tools**

Tools can still injure people when not in use. Sharp edges should be protected and tools should be carried correctly. When working on site, people should give consideration as to how tools are left when not in use. Tools should be placed so they are seen and are out of the way.

### **Damaged tools**

During a working day, tools may become damaged. These **must not be used** until they have been repaired or replaced.

## **20.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Many machines, tools and activities require you to wear some kind of PPE to reduce the risk of injury or work-related ill health. PPE has two serious limitations which are important to remember:

- It does not control the hazard. It only reduces or eliminates the consequences of the hazard when it comes into contact with the human body
- It cannot guarantee to work for 100% of wearers for 100% of the time

As such, PPE should be considered the last line of defence for the operator after all other steps have been taken to control the hazard. To increase the effectiveness of PPE, the following must be considered:

- Training – users must know why PPE is required, the limitations it has, how to wear it effectively, and how to maintain and store it correctly
- Fit – good individual fit is required to ensure full protection

- Acceptability – poorly designed or uncomfortable PPE is less likely to be used than designs that are more acceptable to the user
- Storage – PPE must be stored in appropriate locations to prevent degradation of its effectiveness, e.g. hard hats stored away from UV light (sunlight), chainsaw trousers thoroughly dried before being stored somewhere dry.

Many types of PPE degrade over time. Items need to be inspected and replaced when their protective properties are reduced.

The Trust has detailed Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment.

## 21 Working at Height

There are many accidents each year from people falling from heights. A third of these are falls from ladders. The *Work at Heights Regulations* apply to all work at heights where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. As these regulations cover a wide range of activities, it is important to carry out a risk assessment before you work at height.

As part of the Regulations, staff must ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised
- those involved in work at height are competent
- the risks from work at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled
- equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained

The HSE has detailed guidance and toolkit for work at height: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/>

### Working at height is prohibited for lone working

You must:

- ensure that no work is done at height if it is safe and reasonably practical to do it other than at height
- ensure that the work is properly planned, appropriately supervised, and carried out in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable
- plan for emergencies and rescue
- do all that is necessary to prevent injury from falling objects, either through preventing things from falling in the first place, or if this is not practical then to prevent people entering in to areas where they could be injured by falling objects.
- take account of the findings of your risk assessment that must be completed before working at height

### 21.1 Ladders, stepladders and mobile scaffold towers

The Trust has detailed guidance for use of ladders and maintains a ladder register.

Any scaffolding including a mobile scaffold tower must be installed by a specialist contractor.

## 22 Gas and Electrical Safety

Overhead power lines can either be high voltage lines carried on metal pylons or low voltage on wooden “telegraph” poles. Underground cables and gas pipes may or may not be marked. Dangers associated with these are easy to imagine and great care must always be observed when working near them.

When dealing with contractors working for the Trust, before any works start on site, ensure you clearly establish who is responsible for locating services and putting in adequate safeguards.

Treat all cables or overhead lines as LIVE, unless they have been certified otherwise by the appropriate authority.

## 22.1 Overhead high voltage power lines

Guidance is provided by HSE: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/safety-topics/power-lines.htm>

When planning work near or below power lines you must read and be familiar with the HSE's *Avoidance of danger from overhead electrical lines, GS6*. All such work requires explicit management authorisation. In the case of Nature Reserves this will be the Nature Reserves Manager. There are many restrictions associated with National Grid / UK Power Network power lines and towers so it is best to seek specialist advice.

To ensure that any tree work which has to be carried out near to live electrical equipment is done safely, only work:

- As recommended by the network operator's engineers;
- According to the appropriate working procedures set up by the network operator;
- Using appropriately qualified and competent people.

## 22.2 Working near underground cables or gas pipes

Always ensure you have up to date services maps from the local electricity and gas companies if you are planning on carrying out digging or trenching work.

If the work involves digging near or over a gas main then you **must** seek consent and advice from National Grid.

- Normal mowing and scrub clearing using hand tools and portable power tools above underground cables or pipes should pose no danger to staff or volunteers
- If you are going to dig or disturb the ground near a cable or pipes, its position must be accurately marked prior to work.
- If the exact location of the cable or pipe is not known, hand dig trial holes to find it
- Dig only with spades and shovels. Only apply gentle foot pressure whilst locating the cable or pipe. **DO NOT USE PICKS OR MATTOCKS OR FORKS**
- Backfill any holes with soft soil – do not use stones, bricks or concrete
- Any damage to the cable or pipe coating **must** be reported, however slight the damage

## 22.3 Suspected gas leaks

- Clear everyone from the area
- Telephone the national gas emergency number **0800 111999** immediately
- Extinguish and ban naked flames

## 23 Water Safety

The Trust undertakes a wide range of activities near and sometimes in water including larger open bodies of water such as lakes, ponds and rivers as well as other open water such as ditches and streams. Due to the wide-ranging nature of the work undertaken the safety of these tasks needs to be assessed on a case by case basis. The Trust has generic risk assessments and corresponding Safe Working Procedures including:

- Working in or Close to Water (SWP 14)
- Working with Boats and Rafts (SWP 15)
- Responding to Smart Rafts for Mink Control (SWP 23a)
- Reed Bed Survey (SWP 25)
- Reed Bed Planting (SWP 26)
- Hand Clearing Ponds and Ditches (SWP 34)
- Water Vole Surveying (SWP 51)
- River and Pond Dipping (SWP 72)



General principles for working in or close to water include:

- No lone working when working in water or where there is a significant chance of falling into water
- Always have an emergency plan in place in case someone falls into water, so they can be rescued safely and effectively
- If there is a significant risk of drowning, a suitable personal buoyancy aid must be worn
- Good personal hygiene should be maintained, and any open cuts covered with plasters/water proof gloves to reduce the risk of waterborne infection – see 13.1 above

The Trust has a [Water Safety Policy](#) which has three principle areas supported by subordinate procedures and guidance (including the above referenced SWPs):

- Visitor safety on nature reserves with open water
- Third party arrangements and permitted activities
- Staff and volunteer safety on nature reserves and other places with open water

## 24 Working with Contractors

When the Trust employs contractors to undertake work, it still has responsibilities under Health and Safety law. The Trust must ensure that it has taken steps to reduce the risk of injury to the contractor and his/her staff, as well as ensuring that the contractor has appropriate safety procedures in place to protect their own staff, the Trust's staff and the general public.

The Trust has a legal responsibility to make the contractor aware of any special risks associated with the contract both to its staff and the general public.

Tender documents sent to contractors should include as necessary:

- Site Risk Assessment
- Site Emergency Action Plan
- Asbestos information for Grebe House and Beech Farm where contractors are engaged to complete intrusive works on these sites.
- Trust Health and Safety Site Rules for Contractors when working on Trust buildings and premises.

Failure to make contractors aware of hazards present on a site prior to the contract commencing could lead to a serious incident and result in criminal liability for the Trust.

Contractors should be asked to provide, as part of their tender:

- Risks assessments
- COSHH assessments
- Method statements
- Any relevant certificates of competence for employees likely to be involved in the work
- Copies of public liability and employer's liability insurance certificates
- Details of the level of supervision which will be in place during the contract.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations "CDM Regs" 2015 applies to all construction work unlike the previous regulation where it only applied to projects over a certain size. It can also apply to maintenance work. The HSE has advised that for CDM Regs 2015 'construction work' includes earthworks, all hard landscaping works, installation of pipes and pipelines, demolition, dismantling and preparation for such works including site clearance and excavation and the maintenance of such works.

The Trust has general guidance concerning CDM 2015 and also Client specific CDM guidance.

The tender evaluation process should include an assessment of the ability of the contractor to undertake the work safely. Factors to consider may include:

- The experience the contractor has had of the type of work

- His/her qualifications and skills (levels of training, certificates, etc) and those of the contractor's staff
- His/her health and safety policies, practices and insurance
- The level of supervision he/she provides

#### **Check the contractual terms**

- Standard terms and conditions of contract should include a contractual right for the Trust to stop work that is being carried out unsafely by the contractor.
- The contractor must be informed that the Trust has high standards for health and safety and appropriate requirements must be written into the contract. This may be by reference to the contractor's own health and safety policies and procedures.

#### **Check the skills competence of the contractor for initial engagement / inclusion on the Contractors Approved Listings**

- Experience: references, public liability insurance, relevant work experience, any past notices served by the Health and Safety Executive for unsafe working.
- Training: first aid, health & safety awareness, what problems are envisaged?
- Qualifications: competence certificates, references.

The Trust has a Control of Contractors Checklist to support the practical selection and management of contractors.

#### **Check the management competence of the contractor**

- Ability to identify suitable equipment: What are the requirements of terrain and job?
- Maintenance regimes: maintenance records, records for those parts relating to health & safety.
- Communication with subcontractors: who is responsible, how are they chosen and then supervised, are they competent and responsible regarding health & safety?
- What each contractor needs to do will depend on the nature of the tasks and the risk assessment is therefore vital.

#### **Check the practical details in relation to the work to be done**

The Trust may wish to know:

- What equipment and PPE should be used
- Working procedures or "methods statement" including any permits-to-work
- Number of people required for the job and their level of training
- The contractor's procedures for reporting accidents.

The degree of detail and the amount of supervision required will depend on the overall risk assessment, which will include an assessment of the competence of the contractor.

**THE USE OF A CONTRACTOR DOES NOT REMOVE THE TRUST'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THOSE LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE WORK TO BE PERFORMED. THE TRUST MEMBER OF STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR AGREEING THE CONTRACT IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THE NECESSARY SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN PLACE.**

Once the contractor has been taken on there are still things that need to be planned before the work commences.

#### **Prior to work commencing**

- Agree with the contractor a method statement and a risk assessment with suitable control measures
- Inform the contractor of site safety rules (eg, first aid procedure), leaving the site at night, lone working, refuelling points etc

Health and safety must obviously be monitored by the contractor but also by the Trust, so adjustments will be needed to the risk assessment as the job progresses. If you are not confident about the contractor's approach then you must caution the contractor, if necessary in writing and where there is an immediate risk to the contractor's staff, Trust staff and volunteers or the public, you must stop work immediately. You must also ensure that the contractor reports any accident, injury, disease or dangerous occurrence as specified under the RIDDOR regulations.

At the end of the contract record and communicate any issues or feedback from the contractor relating to safety.

## 25 Health surveillance

Health surveillance is about systematically looking out for early signs of work-related ill health, a system of ongoing health monitoring which is important to be able to:

- detect ill health at an early stage, alerting employers to the need for better controls
- allow employees to raise concerns
- provide an opportunity to reinforce training and education
- highlight lapses in controls providing feedback to managers on the risk assessment and safe working procedures

The Trust has specific Health Surveillance Guidance and all relevant staff i.e. power tool users must complete eLearning Noise and Vibration health and safety awareness modules. Information is provided to volunteers on a regular basis via the Volunteer H&S Newsletter etc.

The Trust has assessed the following areas below as requiring health surveillance as detailed in the table below:

Hazard / agent	Potential job role exposure to be risk assessed
<p><a href="#">Noise (Control of noise at work regulations)</a></p> <p>Ideally, you would start the health surveillance before people are exposed to noise (i.e. for new starters or those changing jobs), to give a baseline. It can, however, be introduced at any time for employees already exposed to noise. This would be followed by a regular series of checks, usually annually for the first two years of employment and then at three-yearly intervals (although this may need to be more frequent if any problem with hearing is detected or where the risk of hearing damage is high)</p>	<p>Reserves Team – use of power tools such as brush cutters, chainsaws, mowers etc.</p> <p><i>Start of hearing tests in early 2023 for Reserves team with suggested repeat in early 2024 the at the 3-yearly interval.</i></p> <p><i>Consideration if baseline testing can / should be implemented on starting employment.</i></p> <p><u>Staff only</u></p>
<p><a href="#">Vibration (Control of Vibration at Work Regulations)</a></p> <p>You must provide health surveillance for all your employees who, despite your action to control the risk, are likely to be regularly exposed above the Exposure Action Value or are considered to be at risk for any other reason. The purpose of health surveillance is to:</p>	<p>Reserves Team – use of power tools such as brush cutters, chainsaws, mowers etc.</p> <p><i>HAVS monitoring in place via annual Tier 2 questionnaires to <u>staff and volunteers regularly</u> using power tools. Any concerns are reviewed and where necessary follow up with specialist OH advice</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify anyone exposed or about to be exposed to hand-arm vibration who may be at particular risk, for example people with blood circulatory diseases such as Raynaud's Disease;</li> <li>• Identify any vibration-related disease at an early stage in employees regularly exposed to hand-arm vibration;</li> <li>• Help you prevent disease progression and eventual disability;</li> <li>• Help people stay in work;</li> <li>• Check the effectiveness of your vibration control measures.</li> </ul>	
<p>Chemical including sensitizers and irritants (The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH))</p>	<p><i>Nothing identified requiring health surveillance</i></p>
<p>Biological Hazards (COSHH) body fluids, sharps or biting, needlestick exposure, animal infections/zoonosis</p>	<p><i>Nothing identified requiring health surveillance</i></p>

**Notes:**

This is not an exhaustive list but a guide as there may be roles which require risk assessment and consultation with the H&S Manager.

Confined spaces, night working and compressed air, asbestos and lead have not been considered above and should not be in scope of Trust work.

Records of sickness are maintained by Business Support and any concern that illness could be due to work will be investigated.

**26 Provision of information, instruction, training and supervision**

Training in health and safety is an integral part of learning and development in the Trust. In some cases, specific training is required as part of the work requirement (e.g. to use a particular piece of equipment). In other cases, training is an integral part of risk management.

A health and safety matrix is the agreed document listing the Health Safety and Wellbeing training requirements for the many and diverse staff and volunteers that work for the Trust. It incorporates not only the very comprehensive trainer led training provided and often accredited externally, but also that of the flexible E-learning packages that are readily available on Atlas the Trust's e-learning platform. Bespoke health and safety toolbox talks and briefings (e.g. Dynamic Risk Assessment) can also be provided on request to the Health and Safety Manager.

The Matrix highlights areas where individual training should or must be provided i.e. mandatory. This document has been approved by the Health and Safety Manager and gives managers a clear way forward to identify minimum staff and volunteer training needs for the categories identified. Managers will be aware that they need to identify training needs and refresher training in the employee's appraisal to ensure Health and Safety competency in the individual's role; this matrix should be used as part of this process.

As a general guide, unless otherwise stated in the matrix, refresher training should be undertaken every 3 years.

Health and Safety training is mandatory as part of Health and Safety Legislation. Please be aware that the training of volunteers and apprentices is also covered under Health and Safety legislation.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has indicated that it is good practice to train volunteers to the same standard as employees if they are undertaking the same tasks. Mandatory training with relevant certification must be in place and maintained where necessary. For example, volunteers using power tools such as chainsaws and brushcutters.

The Health and Safety Handbook, the Health and Safety files on the server and the **SWPs** all provide information for staff on Health and Safety.

Health and Safety is included within the Induction programme for new staff with a tailored induction for management staff. The Trust maintains an overarching Health and Safety Policy with specific safety policies where necessary. There is a library of relevant subordinate procedures and guidance. Managers are responsible for ensuring staff and volunteers under their control are aware of and follow relevant Safe Working Procedures.

Health and Safety is included on the agendas of the Senior Management Team and team meetings.

The Health and Safety law poster is displayed at Trust premises and safety notice boards are maintained.

## **27 Consultation with employees**

All relevant staff are consulted during the review and /or production of any Health and Safety policy and procedures, in writing and usually through open meetings. Staff are involved in the preparation of these documents and the development of systems for their implementation.

Key managers (in addition to the Chief Executive) take part in the Trust's Health, Safety and Personnel Committee, which meets quarterly. Reporting on Health and Safety

Health and safety reports are tabled at each quarterly Health Safety and Personnel Committee. Minutes of the Committee are provided to Council. Where necessary, reports are made direct to Council. For example, in the case of serious incident.

## **28 Wellbeing**

The Trust is committed to its employees' mental health and wellbeing and recognises that it is vital to the success of the Trust in achieving its charitable objectives. We value our employees and will actively seek to support their mental health and wellbeing.

The Trust recognises the enormous contribution made by our volunteers; we simply couldn't deliver on our strategy without them. It has also been well established that volunteering is good for both your physical and mental health. Volunteers should inform the Trust of relevant health information that could affect their volunteering. If an individual's health changes in a way which could affect their volunteering, they must let their primary contact know immediately and this information will be treated sensitively and held in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. The Trust will seek to make reasonable adjustments to the role.

The Trust has a [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#) and action plan. The Trust has established a proactive Wellbeing Team which includes trained Mental Health First Aiders to provide support and advice for any employee experiencing poor mental health. The Trust also has a confidential **Employees Assistance Programme** for staff and their dependants which is free and available 24/7.