



SOUTHERN  
MIDLANDS  
COUNCIL



# Volunteer

## Work Health & Safety and Risk Management

### Handbook

*Assisting in Building Capacity & Sustainability  
in the Southern Midlands*

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## 1. WH&S and Risk Management

### Purpose

To guide and record a process of systematically assessing risks and formulating appropriate risk management strategies. The important thing is the process; the form itself will not keep people safe. The form is important evidence that the Project Manager has responsibly assessed risks related to the work to be undertaken.

### When Should a Risk Assessment be Undertaken?

The risk assessment process must be undertaken prior to the commencement of work on any project. The form has been designed so as to require minimal writing.

### Who Does the Risk Assessment?

The Project Manager must facilitate the risk assessment process and involve all participants. All participants must know the risks and the appropriate control strategies. The Project Manager may delegate the task of completing the form. *(Someone else can do the writing, but the Project Manager must sign off on the completed document.)*

### Conducting a Risk Assessment

As an organizer or facilitator of an activity in which you encourage other people to participate, you owe those people a duty of care. The expectation is that you will take reasonably practicable steps to protect them against reasonably foreseeable accident or injury. In simple terms this means look ahead, foresee how people could be harmed, then put in place measures to prevent that from happening.

The following steps summarise a simple risk assessment process.

(The questions are examples and not an exhaustive list.)

- 1) Consider the Site:** Is it rough, steep, rocky, slippery, dusty, exposed to sun or wind? Is it thickly vegetated? Are there overhanging dead branches? Are there likely to be snakes, bees, wasps, bull ants or spiders? How far are you from emergency assistance if required?
- 2) Consider the Tasks:** Do people have to carry heavy or awkward objects? Will they be swinging tools? Will they be handling chemicals? Will they be working near machinery or cliffs or roads or dangerous water?
- 3) Consider the People:** Are they skilled and experienced in the work to be done? Are there children who require close supervision? Are there older people who are

less agile? Do any of the people have pre-existing injuries or medical conditions that could be aggravated by doing the planned tasks?

**4) How could a person be injured?** Think about ‘these people doing these jobs at this site’. Consider trips and falls, bites and stings, sunburn and dehydration, back or shoulder strains arising from heavy lifting or from overuse or misuse of tools, or eye injuries caused by twigs or spikes.

**5) Identify risk control strategies:** What will people do, or not do, in order to minimize the chance of harm? Involve everyone in the process; utilize all the eyes and experience the group can offer. Jot down the agreed strategies on the risk assessment form. Make sure everyone understands what is expected of them.

**6) Supervise and monitor** to make sure everyone is sticking to the ‘rules’: Some tasks or people might require closer supervision than others. Be prepared to change any strategies that don’t seem to be working.

**7) Emergency response plan:** Make sure you have emergency contact numbers, and ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency

### Assessing the Level of Risk

An important part of formulating your risk control strategies is understanding the level of risk remaining once these are in place, whether you believe the risks are then acceptable and if the activity can proceed. It should also be used to prioritise those risks that require closer management than others. This is done using a standard risk matrix to provide a “Risk Rating”.

Refer to the *Southern Midlands Job Safety Analysis*, attached to the Volunteer Induction Handbook

If in doubt refer to your Supervisor



## Common Risks Encountered by Volunteers and their Associated Risk Treatments

### 1. Use of Vehicles

*If any project activity requires the use of / or travel in, a motor vehicle, then the Group should develop a specific risk assessment.*

*Travel in vehicles is the highest risk activity in which participants are involved.*

#### Associated Risks

Potentially fatal road accidents; head impact injury while entering or exiting vehicles; hand crush injuries from vehicle doors; travel sickness; fatigue.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Undertake a pre-departure vehicle check prior to departing to, and returning from, each project.
- Comply with all State road laws and vehicle seating capacity.
- Drive in a manner that ensures that all occupants are safe, and feel safe. Vehicle occupants must advise the driver immediately if they feel unsafe.
- Wear seat belts, whenever a vehicle is in motion.
- Do not carry chemicals, unsecured tools, equipment or baggage in team vehicles.
- Do not allow arms, heads or any objects to protrude from the vehicle.
- Maintain conditions which optimise the comfort and concentration of the driver eg: minimise distractions, maintain ventilation, take regular breaks.

### 2. Slips, Trips & Falls

#### Associated Risks

Twist injuries to ankles and knees; impact injuries, especially to backs, legs, hands, wrists, head and face. A sprained ankle while not life threatening may present a major evacuation problem at a remote location.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Avoid any obvious hazards such as slippery logs, loose rocks, steep embankments etc.
- Remove trip hazards from the worksite by filling holes, removing unnecessary objects etc.
- Flag, or cordon off, immovable trip hazards.
- Allow at least 2 metres 'visibility space' between participants when walking along tracks.
- Ensure that boots are firmly laced.
- Exercise additional caution when walking downhill, eg: walk across the slope, have a strong leader control walking speed.
- Avoid carrying heavy, or awkward sized, objects on uneven ground.
- Identify, and closely supervise, workers with pre-existing back, knee or ankle injuries.

### 3. Working in Hot Conditions

#### Associated Risks

Dehydration; heat exhaustion; sunstroke; sunburn; skin cancer; cramps; skin irritation; falls or tool use injuries associated with fatigue.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Maintain hydration by providing adequate drinks and regular drink breaks.
- Take advantage of, or create, shaded work areas.
- Schedule, or reschedule, work to avoid heavy exertion during the most intense heat of the day.
- Reinforce the need for long trousers and long sleeves, broad brimmed-hats and sunglasses.
- Provide and encourage the regular use of a SPF 30 sunscreen on any exposed skin.
- Closely monitor participants for signs of fatigue, particularly those who are less fit, inexperienced or unacclimatised.

### 4. Working in Cold Conditions

#### Associated Risks

Hypothermia; dehydration as a result of excessive perspiration under heavy clothing; loss of dexterity and fine motor functioning leading to reduced tool control.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Make ample food and fluids available, including warm drinks if possible.
- Demonstrate and encourage simple warm up stretches before commencement, and after breaks.
- Rotate tasks to avoid prolonged exposure.
- Identify shelter area and use this during periods of inactivity eg: breaks or extreme conditions.
- Structure work to avoid the coldest times of the day.
- Encourage participants to wear layered clothing that enables them to adjust their body temperature according to weather conditions and activity level.
- Wear a warm hat (the head is a major heat loss area).

## 5. Soil Borne Diseases & Infections

### Associated Risks

Soil borne diseases, infection of existing wounds; gastric infections; respiratory complaints eg. asthma.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Prior to project commencement, check with local health authorities if there are known soil borne diseases in the project area.
- Identify any participant in higher risk categories (diabetics, lung or kidney disease or any open cuts or sores) and deploy them on an alternate task.
- Avoid skin contact with wet soil or muddy water, by restructuring the task or by using impervious PPE.
- Cover any minor cuts or scratches.
- Avoid activities that produce dust.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. glasses, respirators, gloves.
- Provide adequate washing facilities and ensure participants wash thoroughly before eating or drinking.

## 6. Bites & Stings

### Associated Risks

Snake or spider bites; insect stings; stings from marine creatures eg: box jelly fish, stonefish; reactions to stinging plants; allergic reactions.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure that all participants are appropriately dressed eg: long sleeves and trousers, sturdy footwear, thick socks.
- Tuck trousers into socks, and wear gloves, when working in areas where there is a known, or suspected, higher risk of spider/insect bites.
- Provide insect repellent.
- Redeploy to another task or location, any participants who have known allergies to bites or stings.
- Conduct a visual inspection of the worksite to identify and flag high risk areas eg: ant nests, stinging plants.
- Walk heavily in suspected snake habitat.

## 7. Manual Handling

### Associated Risks

'Manual Handling' describes any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, push, pull, carry or otherwise move or restrain any animate or inanimate object.

Injuries resulting from a single event of overexertion, or as a consequence of sustained application of force ie: overuse. These injuries are characterised by discomfort or persistent pains in muscles, tendons and soft tissues, most commonly in the back, neck, shoulders and wrists.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Use warm up stretches before commencing manual handling tasks and after breaks.
- Reduce the amount of manual handling by:
  - restructuring the task;
  - using mechanical aids eg. crowbar;
  - carefully planning the workplace layout;
  - having heavy materials delivered as near as possible to the work site.
- Set weight limits for lifting that take account of the skill and physical stature of the team members. (Do not allow demonstrations of strength.)
- Reduce the weights lifted or carried, or the force applied, when working on uneven or slippery surfaces.
- Explain and demonstrate proper individual, pair and group lifting techniques.
- Avoid, or limit the duration of, tasks that require the adoption of biomechanically unsound postures eg. slouching or over reaching.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Check that equipment to be used is appropriate for the tasks to be undertaken and properly maintained.

## 8. Working in Snake Habitat

### Associated Risks

Bites; fear/phobias; risks arising from emergency evacuation.  
(See also Bites and Stings.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Seek local advice regarding the snake risk history of the area.
- Do not work at the site if the risk cannot be adequately managed.
- Where practicable, avoid working in known snake habitat during early spring when snakes are generally most aggressive.
- Wear boots, long trousers and thick socks; gaiters may also be advisable in higher risk areas. Gloves must be worn when hands may be at risk of being bitten.
- Do a 'heavy line walk' through the area before commencing work, and after breaks.
- Do not work in a circular or 'surrounding' formation that might prevent a snake from escaping.
- Use lifting aids (eg. crowbar) when lifting objects that might hide snakes eg. rocks, logs, rubbish etc.
- If a snake is seen, stay clear and point out its location to nearby workers.
- Train in, and regularly revise, snakebite first aid.
- Ensure that the emergency response plan is understood by all participants.
- In the event of a bite, render first aid, then arrange medical assistance. Remember that, in most instances, a high speed dash to hospital gives rise to greater risk than the snake bite.



## 9. Seed Collection

### Associated Risks

Cuts and scratches to body, face and eyes; hay fever and asthma; postural and overuse muscle strains; ground level trips and falls; falls from trees or ladders; impact injuries from objects falling from overhead; bites and stings; passing traffic; exposure to variable weather conditions.

(See also Working near Roadsides, Working at Heights, Bites and Stings, Working in Hot/ Cold Conditions, Manual Handling, Soil Borne Diseases and Infections.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Rotate tasks to guard against postural or overuse injuries, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Maintain a safe working distance between participants.
- Explain and demonstrate how to carry, put down and store the tools giving consideration to both the user and any third party.
- Check that no participants are working directly beneath other participants.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. glasses, gloves, hard hats.
- Minimise the distances over which seed stock needs to be carried.

## 10. Tree Planting

### Associated Risks

Hand and knee spike injuries; tool impact injuries to feet and hands; soil borne infections; muscle strain from bending, posture; soft tissue overuse injuries.

(See also Bites and Stings; Slips, Trips and Falls; Using Swinging Tools, Working in Hot/ Cold Conditions, Manual Handling, Soil Borne Diseases and Infections.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Wear gloves when handling soil, and additional PPE as necessary.
- Conduct a visual inspection of the site, and remove potential risks such as broken glass, wire etc.
- Use kneeling mats or padding if there is a danger of spike injuries from glass, stones etc.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Take regular breaks and encourage gentle stretching.
- Provide adequate hand washing facilities.
- Maintain a safe working space between participants.

## 11. Fencing Construction & Removal

### Associated Risks

Wire spike and laceration injuries; muscle strain injuries related to manual handling and tool use; tool impact injuries; trip and fall injuries.

(See also Using Swinging Tools, Manual Handling, Working in Hot/Cold Conditions, Slips, Trips and Falls, Soil Borne Diseases and Infections.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Arrange delivery of materials as near to fencing site as possible ie. minimise the need for carrying.
- Wear gloves and eye protection whenever working with, or in close proximity to, wire that is coiled or under tension. Gloves should have gauntlets that protect the wrists when handling barbed wire.
- Wear gloves when handling chemically treated posts.
- Keep participants, who are not directly involved, well clear of any unsecured wire under tension.
- Use only approved methods of straining wire with a proper fencing strainer. Do not use a vehicle to strain wire.
- Demonstrate correct use of picket rammers, with emphasis on head, eye, hearing and hand safety.
- Maintain safe working space between participants, especially when digging post holes or ramming the base of posts.
- Keep the work site clear of trip hazards such as posts, wire off-cuts, stones, tools etc.

## 12. Litter Collection

### Associated Risks

Hand laceration or spike injuries; bites and stings; injuries related to bending or lifting; spike or gastric related infections including hepatitis, AIDS etc.

(See also Manual Handling; Bites and Stings; Working near Roadsides; Working in Hot/Cold Conditions; Working in Snake Habitat.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure that adequate washing facilities are available, and are used by participants.
- Look carefully at litter items or piles that might be a refuge for snakes or spiders.
- Check objects for spikes or sharp edges.
- Wear gloves when handling litter; eye protection may also be necessary.
- Use tongs to pick up any objects that are known, or suspected, to be dangerous eg: syringes.
- Place any syringes in a proper 'sharps' container.
- Maintain a safe working distance to avoid the inadvertent scratching or spiking of other participants.

## 13. Working with Chemicals

### Associated Risks

Poisoning; irritation or burning to skin or eyes; loss of respiratory function; back, arm or shoulder strains (see Manual Handling). Chemicals may also present a risk of fire or explosion.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Read and retain the relevant Safety Data Sheet (SDS).
- Check that there are no leaks in containers, and that spray equipment is operating correctly.
- Wear appropriate PPE as advised on the SDS. Note that the use of certain PPE may accelerate the onset of heat stress.
- Rotate tasks to avoid prolonged periods of exposure.
- Explain and demonstrate how to use, carry and store correctly.
- Maintain safe working distance to avoid splash or spray drift contamination.
- Provide adequate washing facilities as directed by the SDS.

## 14. Weeding

### Associated Risks

Spikes and scratches to face and eyes; spike injuries to hands; back and shoulder strains; exposure to chemicals; laceration or impact injuries from cutting tools; hay fever and asthma.

(See also Bites and Stings; Manual Handling; Working with Chemicals; Using Swinging Tools; Soil Borne Diseases and Infections; Working in Snake Habitat)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Wear eye protection where potential for eye injury is identified.
- Chemical splashes and grass or twig spikes to eyes, are common weeding injuries.
- Wear gloves whenever hands are working at ground level.
- Demonstrate and encourage warm up stretches.
- Comply with all SDS directions if using chemicals.
- Maintain a safe working space between participants.
- Provide adequate washing facilities.

## 15. Plant Propagation

### Associated Risks

Muscle aches and strains from overuse or unnatural posture; hand injuries; eye injuries; soil borne disease.

(See also Soil Borne Diseases and Infections, Working in Hot/Cold Conditions; Manual Handling.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Avoid prolonged standing on hard surfaces.
- Have eye protection available, and use as required.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Take regular breaks for stretching and gentle exercise.
- Provide adequate washing facilities.
- Wear gloves when handling soil.

## 16. Surveying & Data Collection

### Associated Risks

Exposure to weather; becoming lost; hay fever and asthma; being unable to communicate in the event of an emergency.

(See also Bites and Stings; Working in Hot/Cold Conditions, Working in Snake Habitat.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure that all participants know the boundaries of the survey area and remain within them at all times.
- Set times at which teams must return or report to the Project Manager.
- Wear boots that are suitable for walking, and sufficiently sturdy for the terrain.
- Instruct that any participant who becomes lost should find the nearest shelter and remain there while using an agreed distress signal eg. three whistle blasts.
- Ensure that all participants have means of communicating an emergency signal (eg: whistle, radios) and fully understand the signals to be used if required.
- If the survey involves collecting scats, ensure that this is done hygienically eg. by using gloves, tongs etc.
- Work in pairs as a minimum group size.

## 17. Using Power Tools

### Associated Risks

Electrocution; hand and foot injuries; muscle strains associated with lifting or overuse; eye injuries from flying particles; headaches and ear damage from excessive noise; dust which may trigger respiratory complaints eg. asthma. The use of generators carries further associated risks such as manual handling, burns from direct contact or use of explosive fuel.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Explain and demonstrate how to use, carry and store tools correctly.
- Maintain strict supervision.
- Use and maintain tools in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
- Ensure all equipment and lead attachments are in a safe working condition and protected from water:
  - no broken plugs, sockets or switches;
  - no frayed or damaged leads;
  - emergency shutdown procedures in place;
  - circuit breakers installed;
  - start/stop switches clearly marked, in easy reach of operator;
  - check that protective guards on tools are attached and effective.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. eye and ear protection, safety boots.
- Clear trip hazards from the work site.
- Position the generator, if used, in a dry, stable location and prevent access to it by unauthorised people.
- Check that the participants have hair tied back and clothing tucked in, including drawstrings on jackets, hats, etc.

## 18. Using Swinging Tools

### Associated Risks

Impact injuries to feet, legs, hands and head; blisters; back and shoulder strains; foreign particles in eyes. (See also Manual Handling)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure that suitable work boots, with reinforced toes, are being worn.
- Demonstrate and encourage simple warm up stretches before commencement and after breaks.
- Maintain safe working distance of at least 3 metres; for short handled tools (eg: hammer), 2 metres for other tools.
- Explain and demonstrate how to use, carry and store tools correctly.
- Maintain tools in good condition.
- Establish a firm footing before swinging tools.
- Rotate tasks even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Adjust the duration of work periods to take account of the physical capacities of the participants.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. hard hat, glasses and gloves.

## 19. Track Construction & Maintenance

### Associated Risks

Hand and foot impact injuries related to tool use; ankle and knee strains from trips and falls; back and shoulder strains; exposure to weather changes; bites and stings; spikes from branches; hand crush injuries from handling rocks; emergency evacuation difficult in remote locations.

(See also Manual Handling, Bites and Stings; Using Swinging Tools; Working in Hot or Cold Conditions; Soil Borne Diseases and Infections; Working in Snake Habitat.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Arrange delivery of tools and materials so as to minimise distance over which things need to be carried.
- Demonstrate and encourage warm up stretches before commencement and after breaks.
- Maintain tools in good condition.
- Maintain safe working distance of at least 3 metres.
- Arrange emergency communication and explain this to all participants.
- Rotate tasks even if participants are not feeling discomfort.
- Wear appropriate PPE.
- Ensure that boots are suitable for walking, and sufficiently sturdy for the terrain.

## 20. Boardwalk Construction

### Associated Risks

Laceration and impact injuries associated with tool use; head impact injuries; eye injuries; muscle strain injuries.

(See also Manual Handling, Using Power Tools, Using Swinging Tools, Soil Borne Diseases and Infections.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Arrange for materials to be delivered as near as possible to the work site to reduce the need for carrying.
- Keep the work site tidy and minimise trip hazards such as power cords, tools, timber.
- Erect signs that warn the public and restrict access to the work site.
- Do not allow participants to walk along bearers and joists.
- Maintain a safe working space between participants.
- Maintain clear access to the construction site, and in any areas where tools or timber will be carried.
- Wear appropriate PPE, particularly hard hats where participants are working at different levels

## 21. Mulching

### Associated Risks

Foot impact injuries; back and shoulder strains (see Manual Handling); hand injuries; foreign particles in eyes: dust which may cause eye and respiratory irritation or asthma; skin irritation.

(See also Slips, Trips and Falls; Soil Borne Diseases and Infections.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Explain and demonstrate wheelbarrow loading and use.
- Explain and demonstrate correct techniques for using a rake.
- Explain and demonstrate correct use of fork/shovel.
- Explain and demonstrate how to carry, put down and store the tools, giving consideration to both the users and the general public.
- Check that all tools are in good repair, and that there are no split handles or loose tool heads.
- Maintain safe working distance of at least 3 metres.
- So far as possible, clear the area of any trip hazards.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Ensure that sturdy work boots are worn and that PPE, including glasses, dust masks and gloves, is available.

## 22. Using Temporary Accommodation

### Associated Risks

Fire; electrocution; cuts and burns associated with food preparation; slips, trips and falls; diseases and infections arising from unhygienic living conditions; inadequate heating, cooling or ventilation.

(See also Slips, Trips and Falls.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Clear all exits so they are uncluttered and readily accessible.
- Inspect all gas and electrical appliances to ensure that they are in a safe, operational condition.
- Do not overload power points with too many appliances.
- Formulate a fire evacuation plan and communicate it to all participants.
- Remove any combustible materials that are stored near a possible fire source.
- Ensure a “No Smoking” policy is adopted in all “in-house” locations.
- Designate a safe smoking area away from accommodation.
- Keep food storage and preparation areas, showers and toilets clean and hygienic.
- Store all garbage outside the accommodation, and dispose of it at the first practicable opportunity.

## 23. Working near Roadsides

### Associated Risks

Exhaust fumes or dust causing eye and respiratory irritation; excessive noise; collision or impact injuries; potentially dangerous litter; communication difficulties.

(See also Litter Collection)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Eliminate or minimise the need for participants to work near roadsides.
- Place signs eg: SLOW DOWN, WORKERS NEAR ROADSIDE etc, and/or wickets hats to indicate to drivers that there are workers ahead. (Note: This should not be done without proper training).
- Wear high visibility vests.
- Maintain direct and continual supervision.
- Check that all participants understand the signals to be used, and that the signals are clear and unambiguous.
- Work upwind or out of fume and dust range.

## 24. Working near Heavy Machinery

### Associated Risks

Exhaust fumes; excessive noise; dust (asthma trigger); collision or impact injuries; communication difficulties.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Eliminate or minimise the need for participants to work near heavy machinery.
- Advise operator of the location and movement patterns of those working nearby.
- Maintain direct liaison between the team, supervisor and the plant operator.
- Develop and demonstrate a set of signals to be used; these must be clear, unambiguous and understood by all.
- Work upwind or out of fume and dust range.
- Wear high visibility vests.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. glasses, respirators, ear protection.



## 25. Working with/near Chainsaws

### Associated Risks

Hand injury; foreign objects in eyes; noise damage to hearing; serious laceration injuries and postural or overuse strains.

(See also Manual Handling; Use of Power Tools.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Chainsaws only to be used by licensed operators.
- Place warning signs at appropriate boundaries of the work area.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg. hard hat, ear muffs, safety boots, face guards, fellers trousers/chaps.
- Clear other workers and debris from the immediate area of the operator and the fall zone.
- Appoint a 'spotter' to guard against any other participant or third party straying into the work area.
- Always engage chain brake when not cutting.
- Start the saw with it resting on the ground. DO NOT DROP START.

## 26. Working with/near Brushcutters

### Associated Risks

Foreign objects in eyes; noise damage to hearing; serious laceration injuries; muscle strains related to overuse and unnatural posture; reduced ability to hear traffic or other hazards.

(See also Manual Handling; Working near Roadsides)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure that the operator is of sufficient strength and stature to control the equipment safely, and is appropriately qualified.
- Check general mechanical condition of brushcutter before use.
- Remove all obstacles (eg: large stones, wire or timber) from the work area, prior to work commencing.
- Adhere to all manufacturer specifications for use and maintenance.
- Keep all feet and hands well clear of moving parts.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg: glasses, eye/face protection, safety boots, overalls, ear protection.
- Stop operating the brushcutter if other people are close by.
- Turn off the brushcutter when not in use or while removing debris.

## 27. Working at Heights

### Associated Risks

Fall related injuries; overuse or posture related strains; impact injuries from falling objects; anxiety and fear.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Wear a fall arrest device (anchored safety harness) and helmet with a chin strap. This is mandatory if the fall height exceeds 1.8 metres.
- Check for electrical power lines before any participant climbs to an elevated work station.
- Do not allow any worker to work directly under another worker.
- Place ladders on a non-slip surface, and secure them against movement.
- Limit the number of participants working at height eg. One person only on a ladder.
- Secure any tools or equipment being used at height.
- Appoint at least one 'spotter' whose sole task is to monitor the safety of workers on elevated work stations.
- Take account of the stature, agility and willingness of participants when allocating tasks.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.

## 28. Working with/near Animals

### Associated Risks

Bites; scratches; infection; unhygienic environment. (See also Manual Handling).

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Provide appropriate animal handling training.
- Stress that all participants must be alert for unpredictable behaviour by animals.
- Take into account the physical strength and stature of persons handling particular animals/species.
- Wear appropriate PPE eg: glasses, gloves, long sleeves.
- Make adequate provision for the maintenance of personal hygiene (eg: clean water and soap).

## 29. Working near Water

### Associated Risks

Drowning; risks associated with water/wetland habitat eg. crocodiles, mosquitoes, snakes; illness arising from water borne disease or pollution; exposure to cold winds; sun glare and ultraviolet reflection.

(See also Bites and Stings, Working in Hot/Cold Conditions, Working in Snake Habitat.)

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Maintain a safe distance between participants and water that is deemed dangerous because of depth, current, murkiness, turbulence, difficulty of escape etc.
- Refrain from working on steep, slippery or unstable banks.
- Fence, flag or tape off high risk areas.
- Identify non-swimmers and ensure that they are deployed away from higher risk areas.
- Where there is an inadvertent possibility of the need to rescue someone from the water, ensure there are rescue aids readily accessible eg. rope, long pole, flotation device. Where there is a current, these aids must be positioned downstream of the most likely entry point.
- Formulate an emergency response plan that is based on non-contact rescue strategies.
- Do not facilitate recreational swimming unless in a supervised and/or controlled area.
- Encourage participants to have adequate spare, dry socks.
- Provide adequate washing facilities eg. soap and clean water.

## 30. Using Picket Rammers

### Associated Risks

Crush injuries; impact injuries; muscle strain injuries related to manual handling and tool use; overexertion. (See also Manual Handling, Using Swinging Tools).

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Use rammers with a minimum length of 1.2 metres.
- Explain and demonstrate the proper technique for picket ramming.
- Use warm up stretches before commencing picket ramming.
- All participants involved in task to wear hard hat, ear and eye protection and gloves.
- Only allocate this task to people with the physical capacity to perform it safely.
- Rotate tasks, even if participants are not experiencing discomfort.
- Rammer not to be lifted off post during operation.
- Remove/limit distractions for participants involved in post ramming.
- Maintain a safe working distance between participants

## 31. Collecting Sharps

### Associated Risks

Needlestick injuries; infections including hepatitis, AIDS etc. (See also Litter Collection).

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Use tongs to pick up sharps.
- Wear gloves and sturdy footwear. Eye protection may also be necessary.
- Determine a search strategy i.e. gain local knowledge of area, conduct a visual inspection of the site and flag any sharps for collection, minimise the number of persons involved in a search.
- Rake through known areas of disposal.
- Maintain a safe working distance to avoid the inadvertent scratching or spiking of other participants.
- Provide soap and water on site.
- Withdraw team if necessary to allow for professional removal of sharps.
- Put all sharps in approved sharps containers for disposal. Disposal to be in accordance with local health authority/council regulations.

## 32. Working in the Dark

### Associated Risks

Trips and falls; spike injury; exposure to cold; becoming lost; bites and stings.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Check that no person has a physical or psychological problem that renders them unsuitable for working in the dark.
- Check that each person has a reliable torch.
- Advise all participants to have ample, layered clothing.
- Check that work area boundaries are understood and meeting point is known.
- Work in pairs as a minimum group size; establish a 'buddy' system.
- If possible, during daylight hours inspect the site and remove or clearly mark trip hazards or other hazardous areas.
- Provide each person with a whistle and ensure that each person knows that three long blasts is the standard emergency/distress signal.
- Avoid rough or slippery areas.
- Minimise the number, weight and bulk of items to be carried.
- Wear high visibility vests.

### 33. Using a Machete or Cane Knife

#### Associated Risks

Wrist arm and shoulder sprains, back strain, jarring injuries, cuts to limbs.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Use only when an alternate tool is not practicable (eg. loppers, hand saws, secateurs or similar).
- Ensure machetes are kept sharp.
- Team leaders only to sharpen (sharpen away from blade).
- Ensure handle and wrist strap are securely fastened.
- Only assign machetes to volunteers who have previously demonstrated high levels of responsibility.
- Allow a maximum of four machetes to be used at any one time.
- Team Leader to maintain direct supervision.
- Demonstrate correct use, including appropriate cutting angle (to avoid blade bouncing off target) and safe working distance (5 metre buffer zone).
- Use only for cutting soft vegetation (small branches, vines, grasses etc) not hard wood.
- Ensure appropriate PPE is worn, including gloves, long pants, sturdy boots and shin pads.
- Rotate tasks or take regular breaks to maintain concentration and reduce repetitive strain injury.
- Cover blade with a sheath or split hose when not in use, and store in an appropriate place.

### 34. Working with Schools

#### Associated Risks

Assault of students, allegations of improper behaviour levelled at Group participants, tool or equipment injury to students.

#### Risk Treatment Actions

- Do not allow yourself or any volunteer to be alone with a school student or young person.
- Always try to arrange for the team to have access to a toilet that is not used by the students.
- Avoid moving a vehicle on school property while students are out of class or in close proximity. If the vehicle absolutely must be moved, switch on hazard lights, appoint spotters in high visibility vests and drive at a speed no greater than 10kph.
- Where possible coordinate breaks for your team with the meal breaks of the school students, this reduces the need to manage third parties entering your worksite.
- Ensure that tools or personal belongings are not left in unsecured, unsupervised areas.
- Insist that a teacher remain present if students are to work with or near to the team.
- Observe the sign in / sign out procedures required by the school and observe the rules, laws and standards that apply to the school grounds, eg. no smoking or wearing clothes with offensive slogans or images.
- Become familiar with the school's emergency evacuation plan and muster point.

## 35. Working with/near Power Augers

### Associated Risks

Noise – damage to hearing, rotational hazard – entanglement risk, inhalation of exhaust fumes, muscle strains related to overuse and unnatural posture.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Ensure the operator is properly trained and competent to operate the equipment and is of sufficient strength and stature to do so.
- Ensure the operator knows the proper use of the controls, especially how to engage the brake and how to shut down the auger quickly if necessary.
- Complete a pre-start check of the auger before use; including the condition of the drill bit, padding, anti-vibration mountings, exhaust and that the automatic braking system and switches are working.
- Ensure that a 3 metre buffer zone is maintained between the auger and other people.
- Adhere to all manufacturer specifications for use and maintenance.
- Keep feet and hands well clear of rotating auger bit.
- Tuck in loose clothing, keep hat cords behind the neck, tie back long hair or put it down the back of the shirt and remove necklaces to avoid entanglement.
- Engage auger brake when moving between holes and turn off the auger when not in use.
- Rotate tasks to prevent manual handling injury.
- Wear appropriate PPE, as advised by the manufacturer eg: safety boots, gloves, ear protection.

## 36. Working in Tick Habitat

### Associated Risks

Itching and discomfort, allergic reaction, diseases including tick typhus and spotted fever.

### Risk Treatment Actions

- Prior to project, seek local advice on presence of ticks. (If in plague proportion, reconsider whether or not to continue.)
- Reduce tick access to skin by wearing long trousers (tucked into socks), long sleeved shirt (tucked in), broad-brimmed hat (reduces likelihood of ticks from getting into hair or down the neck of clothing).
- If possible, wear light coloured clothing so that any ticks on clothing are more readily spotted.
- Apply repellent containing DEET to exposed skin.
- Minimise disturbance to vegetation (as this appears to make ticks more active) by working for short periods in one location where ticks are a problem.
- After leaving tick area, have team members check each other for ticks – hair, behind ears, back of neck etc.
- Encourage team members to check themselves fully when showering.
- If possible, after working in a high tick population area, place clothing in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.