

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Health & Safety



Health & Safety Induction – Volunteer Handbook

17 October 2022

Contents

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 The Law**
- 3 Responsibilities**
- 4 Health & Safety Policy**
- 5 Risk Assessment**
- 6 Lone Working**
- 7 Driving for the Trust**
- 8 Smoke Free Premises & Vehicles**
- 9 Fire Safety**
- 10 Work Equipment**
- 11 Clothing & Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
- 12 Hazardous Substances (CoSHH) & Materials**
- 13 Health Risks**
- 14 Lifting & Handling**
- 15 First Aid & Medical Conditions**
- 16 Alcohol & Drugs**
- 17 Safeguarding**
- 18 Young Volunteers**
- 19 Accidents & Near Misses**
- 20 Where to get Help**

1 Introduction

Thank you for volunteering with the Scottish Wildlife Trust. We hope you find the experience a rewarding, enjoyable, and above all, safe one. Our army of volunteers has an impressive range of knowledge, skills and experience and are an essential part of the Trust and the important work we do.

However, as with any workplace, there can be risks involved in the work we do and where we do it. So, we will take all reasonable steps to safeguard your health and safety by providing you with all the necessary equipment, information, training and support to help you stay safe.

- Please familiarise yourself with the relevant safety measures in place for your volunteer role and workplace, and comply with them at all times
- If at any time you feel you do not have the physical capability or expertise to undertake a particular task or a wider role, please do let us know
- Any documents referred to below are available to you on the Trust website under *Keeping People Safe* or from any Trust manager

2 The Law

The Trust has a legal duty to safeguard, *so far as is reasonably practicable*, your health and safety when volunteering with us. This duty extends to protecting others who may be impacted by the way that we work; including Trust staff and partners, the public and our volunteers.

In health and safety law the term *worker* is used to describe both staff and volunteers. It also means volunteers have individual responsibilities.

3 Responsibilities

In reality, health and safety is everyone's responsibility, although there are specific responsibilities defined by an individual's role within the Trust; from council and senior management to front-line staff and volunteers. Your responsibilities as a volunteer match those of Trust staff;

- Minimising the risks to yourself and others from the work you do
- Co-operating with Trust management on health and safety matters
- Complying with risk assessments and safety instructions etc.
- Not misusing or interfering with anything provided to keep people safe

- Reporting any faults, defects or shortcomings that could cause harm
- Not undertaking any task without the proper competence and authority
- Informing your team leader if your ability to work safely is in any doubt
- Reporting all accidents, incidents and near misses

4 Health & Safety Policy

Our Health & Safety policy defines the arrangements in place to manage health and safety across the Trust. It's supported by a number of *Trust Standards* which provide the finer detail on key areas of health and safety, and the standards we require of anyone working on our behalf.

5 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is an essential tool for us in identifying and controlling any risks in the work we do. It is also a legal requirement where there are known risks. You will be informed of the findings of any risk assessments for the activities you participate in and advised how to work safely. For volunteer groups working without Trust staff supervision, the use of risk assessments is still a requirement where there are potential hazards in the work being done.

We have a library of generic risk assessments for most of our work activities available on the Trust website, and you can request risk assessment training through Peter Gilbert, our Volunteer Development Officer.

6 Lone Working

The Health & Safety Executive defines lone working as;

- Working alone on site or at home
- Working away from the office at remote locations
- Working outside normal hours
- Travelling as part of work (not including commuting)

The risks associated with lone working can include the site, the tools being used, the weather, getting lost or being injured or taking ill when there's no immediate help at hand etc.

Many volunteers will fall into the category of a *lone worker*, at least occasionally while, for others, it's a regular routine. Those of you who work alone regularly should; read our lone working policy and appoint a *Buddy*.

A *Buddy* is simply someone who knows what your plans are - where you'll be, when you're leaving and plan to be back, and be told if those plans change. Our lone working policy explains what your *Buddy* should do if you fail to report in as agreed. If you only work alone occasionally, it's still important that you tell someone where you'll be and what you'll be doing.

7 Driving for the Trust

If your volunteering role within the Trust requires you to drive any vehicle including your own, you must be pre-authorized to do so. This is normal practice across all UK industry to satisfy DVLA and insurance company requirements. This authorisation requires the completion of a questionnaire and some pre-checks.

If you drive a Trust owned, rented or hired vehicle, the use of mobile phones and hands-free kits are not permitted as numerous studies have shown they're a known distraction for drivers.

8 Smoke-free Premises & Vehicles

Smoking is not permitted in Trust premises or vehicles at any time (including outbuildings and hides etc.). This includes vapes / e-cigarettes. If you smoke outside, do so away from any combustible materials, be considerate of others and if working on reserves, be aware of the risk of wildfires.

9 Fire Safety

If you volunteer in Trust premises you'll be briefed on the fire safety precautions as part of the office tour; including raising the alarm, safe evacuation and where the assembly point is. Never try to put out a fire unless it's to aid an evacuation or the fire is very small and you can extinguish it without putting yourself or anyone else at risk.

10 Work Equipment

Work equipment is defined as anything used for work; from hand tools to

ladders, machinery, office equipment and vehicles. Whatever you work with, you must be competent to use it. That may require formal training, licencing or qualification, you may have previous experience, or it could be no more than a colleague showing you how to use the equipment safely.

Some work equipment may require pre-use checks, need to be stored under specific conditions or be regularly serviced or maintained.

- Only ever use work equipment for its intended purpose
- Never make any unauthorised modifications or repairs
- Do report any problems with Trust tools or equipment immediately
- If you ever use your own equipment for work, the same conditions apply

11 Clothing & Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Always dress for the activity, weather conditions and the site you are working on. Sturdy footwear and gloves are particularly important. Do note that occasionally it may be necessary for your supervisor to restrict certain activities to those wearing protective footwear or other PPE.

PPE is any item worn to protect the user and includes, gloves, waterproofs, some footwear, goggles, ear defenders and so on. Some, more complex, PPE may require the user being shown how to use, wear and store it properly.

Where the requirement for PPE has been identified by the law, policy, risk assessment, industry best practice or by the manufacturer, its use is mandatory. There is no personal choice. Where your volunteering work requires PPE, you can be provided with what you need free of charge.

12 Hazardous Substances (CoSHH) & Materials

We use a wide range of hazardous substances across the Trust. They're easily recognisable by the red & black (or orange & black) warning symbols on the container or packaging. Any such product must be risk assessed:



The competence required to use CoSHH materials varies widely between formal qualification and simply reading the instructions on the label. If you handle any CoSHH product, make sure you know how to use it safely, or if there's a suitable non-CoSHH alternative please use that instead.

CoSHH substances must always be stored safely when not in use to avoid unauthorised use and to minimise any fumes / fire risks. Always think:

Risk Assessment - Training - PPE - Use - Transportation - Spillage - Storage

Asbestos isn't classed as CoSHH. However, it can be hazardous and is present in a few of our premises (and is sometimes dumped on our reserves). If left undisturbed, the risks are low. If you volunteer indoors, the office manager will tell if you if asbestos is present and what precautions are in place.

13 Health Risks

Working on our reserves may expose you to health risks from animals, plants and insects, while using tools and machinery can lead to issues such as lifting and handling injury, noise or vibration.

Weil's disease is an infection usually caused by rats, but dogs grey squirrels and other animals can also transfer the disease to humans. Take care when working around bodies of water and any sources known to be contaminated. If working in or around water keep cuts and abrasions covered, restrict skin contact and avoid swallowing water. Wash any exposed skin before eating, drinking or smoking. Weil's disease is usually treated with antibiotics.

Ticks are common on heathland and in areas of rough vegetation and bracken. Some ticks carry Lyme's Disease. To avoid bites, keep your skin covered when working in vegetation and check regularly for ticks on your clothing. If bitten, remove the tick gently, using a tick removal tool, taking care to remove the mouth parts and body together. Signs of Lyme's disease are a ring-like rash around the bite, together with flu like symptoms and / or swollen glands. If you have similar symptoms – see a doctor straight away.

Do not handle sharps, such as needles, syringes etc. Inform your supervisor who will make arrangements for the item to be disposed of safely.

We advise those working on our reserves to have an up to date tetanus jab. However, do note these risks are rare if proper precautions are taken – so please don't be overly concerned and don't let it put you off volunteering!!

14 Lifting & Handling

Lifting and handling is the movement or supporting of a load by hand or bodily force, i.e. pushing, pulling, lifting, putting down, carrying or holding.

Lifting and handling incorrectly can cause long term, or even permanent, damage. So always use sensible lifting techniques, take regular breaks and alternate tasks where possible to avoid excessive or repetitive strain. If you're unable to carry out a task or need help don't be afraid to speak up!

15 First Aid & Medical Conditions

First aid is not an automatic requirement for all events and activities, however, there are tasks where first aid cover is needed. If volunteering in an environment or activity where first aid cover is required, make sure you know who the first aider is.

Trust first aid kits must not contain tablets, lotions or ointments. If you require any such item, or have personal medication, please bring it with you. Our Volunteer Development Officer can also arrange to arrange free first aid training for volunteers who express an interest.

Please let us know in advance if you are on medication or have a medical condition which may affect your ability to work safely (e.g. vertigo, asthma, epilepsy, allergies to plasters or wasp stings etc.). If an accident occurs as a result of a medical condition we do not know about, it may put you or others at risk and limit our ability to administer suitable first aid.

16 Alcohol & Drugs

The consumption of alcohol at work or on Trust premises, is only permitted with the consent of the CEO, e.g. at events or celebrations. However, out of hours exceptions are made where we provide overnight staff and volunteer accommodation at Handa Island & Loch of the Lowes. The use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited and you must never drive or operate machinery while under the influence of any alcohol or drugs, or where you may experience any adverse side effects from prescribed or over the counter medication.

17 Safeguarding

The Trust carries out a significant amount of work with children and protected adults and this is defined as *regulated work*. You are not permitted to undertake *regulated work* unless you are a member of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. If your role requires membership we will arrange

it. Our Safeguarding policy is available on the Trust website.

18 Young Volunteers

We welcome young people as volunteers but it is necessary to take some additional precautions to protect them. The work must not exceed the young person's physical or mental capability and a risk assessment will be carried out before work starts. Additionally, for safeguarding reasons, volunteers under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult known to them.

19 Accidents & Near Misses

Reporting accidents at work is legal requirement. It's also how we can identify what went wrong and decide how we can avoid it happening again.

Our accident and near miss reporting is done online, with reports completed and submitted by Trust managers. If you have an accident please let us know as soon as possible. Similarly, reporting near misses allows us to assess if we can take any action that may prevent a future accident.

20 Where To Get Help

You can ask any Trust manager for help at any time. If you're looking for a policy, risk assessment or guidance, the Trust website holds a wealth of information under *Keeping People Safe*. However, if you can't quickly find what you need, ask the Health & Safety Officer for help.

And Finally...

We all have an obligation to ensure our actions do not put ourselves or anyone else at risk. While we have measures in place to control risks and prevent accidents, the most effective way to stay safe is through vigilance and common sense. Always work safely and if you see something you believe is potentially hazardous, warn your colleagues and bring it to our attention immediately so that steps can be taken to minimise the risks

Enjoy your time with the Trust and stay safe.

Jim Boyce
Health & Safety Officer