

VOLUNTEERS' HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE



**WATERWAY
RECOVERY**
GROUP

USEFUL INFORMATION

Thank you for volunteering to work with us.

To help keep you safe on site, this booklet contains initial Health & Safety information that new volunteers need to know. It was up to date at the time of printing; however a newer version may be available on the WRG web site:

WWW.WRG.ORG.UK

This website contains much more comprehensive Health & Safety information, including downloadable versions of this booklet and the much more detailed Practical Restoration Handbook.

The contact address for all WRG Health & Safety matters including Driver Authorisation, requests for further copies of this booklet and the address for accident reports to be sent to is:

Waterway Recovery Group, Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA
email: enquiries@wrg.org.uk



Always ensure that you are working a safe distance away from other people.

Photos by WRG © 2017

Waterway Recovery Group is the national co-ordinating body for voluntary work on the inland waterways of Britain and is part of The Inland Waterways Association (a registered charity).
Registered office: Island House, Moor Road, Chesham, HP5 1WA.

INTRODUCTION

To most of you, work on a waterway is a new experience. Despite its peaceful setting, the site you will be working on is basically a construction site that presents hazards to you, your fellow volunteers and members of the public. It is therefore subject to the same safety rules as a professional building site.

The fact that we are a volunteer organisation without the resources of a large professional construction company does not mean that we can compromise on such an important matter as Health & Safety.

This brief guide has been issued to you to explain some of the safety requirements and hazards and must be read before you start work.

It represents only the first part of your Health & Safety induction; when you arrive on site you will be given all the training and information necessary for you to carry out the work safely and enjoyably. In particular a Site Safety Plan will exist for the project - you should consult this whenever you have a query; if you are unsure or have any concerns about anything you should ask the Site Leader.

You must follow the Site Leader's instructions at all times.

IF YOU FAIL TO FOLLOW SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS YOU WILL BE BARRED FROM SITE.

Always remember that you are responsible not only for your own safety but also the safety of others working with you and the public.

If you see anyone else working in an unsafe way, you have a duty to notify the Site Leader to stop this - do not just ignore it. Encourage others by working safely and setting a good example, and look out for the safety of others including members of the public and other visitors to the site.

We hope that you enjoy your work with us and you are more likely to do that if you follow these simple guidelines.

1.1 GENERAL WORK HABITS

THINK SAFETY - ACT SAFELY

The well-known phrase 'a place for everything and everything in its place' is one of the guiding principles of accident prevention. Keeping the work site tidy not only reduces accident risks by eliminating the physical hazards, but personnel can work more easily in clean and tidy surroundings than when disorder prevails. A great many accidents occur as a result of poor site tidiness.

The simplest contribution you can make to your safety and that of others is to keep your own work area tidy. For example:

- ✓ Never leave tools in a position where they represent a hazard to yourself or others, for example on top of a wall or lying on the ground. When you have finished using them, put them away tidily and in a clean and serviceable condition.
- ✓ Always tidy up after completing the job, and keep the site tidy while you work.
- ✓ If you see any material or equipment in a position that is likely to cause an accident, move it to a safe place. For example broken glass and nails protruding from boards are common causes of injury.
- ✓ Encourage others to follow your efforts in site tidiness.
- ✓ Always store materials safely, neatly and tidily in the proper place and they should never be over-stacked so that they become a potential falling hazard.

1.2 BEFORE YOU START A JOB

USE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE RIGHT JOB - IMPROVISED TOOLS CAUSE ACCIDENTS

- ✓ Think carefully! Do not try to perform an unfamiliar job without instruction.

Plan the work fully before you start, always observe common-sense safety practices and if in doubt, don't hesitate to ask.

- ✓ Make sure that you have all the PPE you need for the job – and that it is in good condition

1.3 SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

KEEP YOUR EYES AND MIND ON THE WORK IN HAND

They can be caused by unsuitable site footwear, inattention or by neglect of the principles in section 1.1

- ✓ Make sure your footwear is suitable
- ✓ Keep all access routes and work areas free from obstruction at all times.
- ✓ Always ensure there is safe access to wherever you are working. For example do not expose yourself to risk by climbing up scaffolding or brickwork - use a ladder. The commonest site accidents are slips, trips and falls.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

2.1 PERSONAL PROTECTION

When working it is possible that you will come into contact with some form of material which can cause harm to you if protective equipment is not worn. Make sure that you have the correct type of protection for the job. Always take good care of protective clothing and all other equipment required for your safety, otherwise it may become a danger to yourself and others who may use it.

Your site leader should provide you with all mandatory safety equipment. If you think you need something to protect you, ask for it and make sure you get it.

2.2 HEAD PROTECTION

It is mandatory that you wear a safety helmet conforming to the EN397 standard when instructed either by the site leader or in the Site Safety Plan. In practice, almost all WRG work sites are 'hard hat areas'.



Almost all WRG sites are 'Hard Hat Areas'

2.3 EYE PROTECTION

Whilst working, follow these rules:

- ✓ You should wear eye protection at all times on site. Our accident reports show that it is usually another person's work that results in an eye injury – there are many hazards not least dust, splinters, stone chips, splashes from concrete mixers etc. – so only remove your eye protection in the designated areas.
- ✓ Certain tasks (identified by the Risk Assessment) will require additional eye protection – you must wear this.
- ✓ In exceptional circumstances some sites / specific tasks may not require eye protection – only remove eye protection if specifically advised by the Camp / Site Leader (on the basis of the Risk Assessment).

2.4 PROTECTION OF HANDS AND SKIN

- ✓ Where gloves are required, make sure they are appropriate to the task and use them.
- ✓ Cover up any skin breaks with a plaster or appropriate dressing as soon as possible.
- ✓ If you experience any skin irritation, stop working and consult the site leader at once.
- ✓ Wash your hands at break times, after work and whenever they are contaminated. Use soap and water and dry them thoroughly. The WRG vans also have hand wipes which may be more convenient.
- ✓ If a mild cleansing agent is necessary, only use a proprietary brand designed for that purpose, then remove it thoroughly with soap and water and rinse well. Do not use petrol, paraffin or abrasives to clean your skin. Use of these can cause skin irritations and dermatitis.

2.5 Protection of Feet

- ✓ You are strongly advised always to wear safety boots or shoes with toe and sole protection - they have prevented many crippling accidents.

For some jobs - for example those involving moving heavy materials such as stone - the use of safety footwear is compulsory. The site leader will ensure that only people wearing appropriate foot protection will be permitted to do these jobs.

Do not wear boots and shoes that require repair.

Please note: Due to the diversity of tasks encountered on a Canal Camp, WRG have decided that safety footwear is mandatory for all Canal Camps (except Festival based Camps).

2.6 PROTECTION OF HEARING

Prolonged exposure to high noise levels will lead to permanent impairment of your hearing. When working with noisy machinery, or when working close to somebody who is using noisy machinery, you must wear ear protection.

Always consider other people when you are using noisy machinery: make sure people working close to you are wearing ear protection; look out for passers-by: stop work if they come close to you and do not start again until they have passed.

A good 'rule of thumb' is that if you have to raise your voice to talk to people near you, then you (and they) should be wearing ear protection.

2.7 PROTECTION FROM EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURE

Take precautions against the effects of hot or cold weather conditions:

- ✓ In hot weather use sun protection and drink plenty of cold drinks
- ✓ In cold weather wear warm clothing and drink hot drinks.

If working in hot or cold weather, watch out for any signs of heat exhaustion, sunstroke or hypothermia - in yourself and other volunteers. If you start suffering from the effects of heat or cold, it is not only dangerous to your own health but could easily cause loss of concentration and consequent danger to others too. Stop work immediately and inform the Site Leader.

SITE HAZARDS

3.1 SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH

On a site you will meet many substances which, if not properly handled, may injure your health.

These may include fuel, oils, greases, creosote, tar, paints and cement/concrete and lime/lime mortar.

Information on the hazards these present will be available in the Site Safety Plan and hazard sheets in the site document case.

Where protective equipment is indicated, use it. It is provided for your safety.

Cement dust and wet concrete and mortars are particularly hazardous. With sensitive skins, burning can take place very quickly and all users should be fully aware of the hazard and of the precautions necessary. A particular danger is trapping of dust or splashes, e.g. around the top of boots, where damage is accelerated by abrasion and rubbing.

First Aid measures for cement are:

Eye Contact: wash eyes immediately with plenty of clean water for at least 15 minutes and seek medical advice without delay.

Skin Contact: wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water before continuing. Clothing contaminated by wet cement, concrete or mortar should be removed and washed thoroughly before use.

If irritation, pain or other skin trouble occurs, tell the site leader and seek medical advice.

3.2 CORRECT HANDLING AND LIFTING

Correct manual lifting and handling of a load prevent strain and reduce effort. The persistent use of bad lifting methods causes strains which may eventually become severe. If you have suffered a back strain you will know the agony that can result.

When lifting a load always:

- ✓ Plan the whole lifting operation (include putting the object down safely) before you start
- ✓ Make sure your path is clear
- ✓ Get help if the load is beyond your capacity or is awkward in shape. Check the Site Safety Plan and Method Statement, and use mechanical assistance if it is available.
- ✓ Look out for splinters, projecting nails, wire or sharp edges.
- ✓ Wear gloves when handling materials.
- ✓ Stop work immediately if you feel a strain: to carry on might result in a serious injury.
- ✓ When working in a gang, take your instructions from one person only.



Make sure that you have the correct type of protection for the job.

Always lift in the approved manner:

- ✓ Feet apart about 12-18 inches (300-450mm).
- ✓ One foot further forward than the other.
- ✓ Chin in - avoid your head dropping backwards or forwards.
- ✓ Knees in the crouch position.
- ✓ Get a firm grip on the load.
- ✓ Lift with your back straight and use your thigh muscles.
- ✓ Lift in easy stages.
- ✓ Do not change grip whilst carrying.
- ✓ To lower a load, always use the reverse of the above directions.
- ✓ When pushing, pulling, dragging or shovelling any load always apply the above principles.

3.3 HAND TOOLS

- ✓ Always use the correct tool for the job.
- ✓ Do not misuse a tool.
- ✓ Do not use damaged or worn tools.
- ✓ Report any breakages to the site leader.
- ✓ If using a sharp tool, keep your hands behind the cutting edge.
- ✓ Do not keep sharp tools in your pocket.
- ✓ Keep all tools clean and in good condition. Sharp tools when not in use should have their cutting edges covered.
- ✓ Always wear gloves and other personal protection if they are appropriate to the tool and the job.
- ✓ Always ensure that you are working a safe distance away from other people, especially when anyone is using tools such as mattocks and axes which are swung at arm's length.

3.4 PORTABLE POWER TOOLS

You may only use portable power tools such as drills, breakers, and strimmers with the

site leader's permission. If you have not used that type or model of power tool before, you may only use it after training on site and with initial supervision by an experienced user of that type of tool.

Always wear the correct protective clothing.

Before you start a power tool, always make sure you know how to stop it.

If a power tool breaks down do not try to repair it yourself; take the tool to the site leader: otherwise you could make a simple repair into a major one.

3.5 WEIL'S DISEASE (LEPTOSPYROSIS)

Weil's Disease can be caught by people who work in or near stagnant water. It is carried by rats and spread through their urine. Humans can catch the disease by contaminated water getting into cuts or skin abrasions. It is thought to be responsible for approximately one death per five years in the UK.

If you have influenza-like symptoms three days to three weeks after working in the canal, consult your doctor, telling him/her that you have been working in an environment where Leptospyrosis is a possibility. This will allow correct treatment to be given.

3.6 FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

3.6.1 FIRE PREVENTION

Fire prevention is the key objective. General site tidiness will go a long way towards preventing fires. Rubbish, paper, oily rags, etc. can ignite by heat and fumes from mechanical plant, or by sparks from bonfires.

Do not allow the accumulation of flammable material.

Prevent means of ignition from coming into contact with a flammable mixture, e.g. petrol vapour near overheating mechanical equipment, faulty/over-heating electrical equipment.

Allow engines on mechanical plant to cool before refuelling.

Be aware of the possibility of trenches and lock chambers filling with dense fumes.

If you smoke, you should do so well away from the work site and be very careful when discarding cigarette ends.

3.6.2 BONFIRE SAFETY

Bonfires can be a safe method of disposing of cut down vegetation etc. on site if you follow these safety precautions:

Never use petrol or other accelerant to light a fire.

Choose your bonfire site carefully:

- ✓ on level ground
- ✓ where it will not block access for volunteers or passers-by
- ✓ where smoke will not be a nuisance or hazard on the site or to local residences or nearby roads
- ✓ away from dry grass or vegetation that might catch fire

Never light a fire under or close to trees or power cables.

Never light a fire in a strong wind, as it may blow out of control.

Never over-stack a bonfire such that it is likely to fall over.

Always watch that sparks and flying embers do not set light to anything.

Never leave a fire unattended: always wait until it has burned down before leaving site.

Remember to stop feeding a bonfire early enough to allow it time to burn down before the end of the working day, so it can be completely extinguished one hour before leaving site.

3.6.3 DEALING WITH FIRES AND EMERGENCIES

Inform the Site Leader if fire breaks out, if a bonfire has got out of control, or if there is a fire hazard e.g. spilled petrol.

If there is a fire on site or in the accommodation, follow the agreed emergency plan. Do not put yourself at any risk if you attempt to extinguish the fire - make sure that someone has called the Fire Brigade to deal with it.

Ensure that you and the other volunteers get to a place of safety away from the fire.

If a person's clothing is on fire don't hesitate to use a water or powder extinguisher on them. Alternatively throw a rug or blanket over them to smother the flames, and roll them on the ground.

As soon as possible cool any burnt skin with cold water. Do not attempt to remove burnt clothing. Seek medical attention.



Mechanical plant may only be used by competent persons.

WRG VEHICLES AND PLANT

4.1 DRIVER AUTHORISATION

WRG requires all operators and drivers to have received training before using plant or vehicles. When trained, you will receive an authorisation card which must be carried whenever you are using the equipment and which must be shown on demand to anyone requesting to see it. Your site leader will give you full details of the training required and of how to obtain it.

4.2 WRG ROAD-GOING VEHICLES

Before you can drive a WRG vehicle, you must fulfil the conditions below, have had a 'test' drive with an authorised instructor, have had your driving licence checked and have provided Head Office with an authenticated copy of your driving licence.

Any driver must:

1. Be 25 years of age or over.
2. Have held a full driving licence for this class of vehicle for one year.
3. Have no current penalty points on the licence.
4. Have no medical condition which requires notification to DVLA.
5. Have no special terms currently imposed on their own policies.
6. Have their driving licence on their person.
7. Be a competent driver of that type of vehicle.
8. Be authorised by the Site Leader or the keeper of the vehicle to drive it.
9. Be entirely sober.

Some of the above requirements can be modified in individual cases by written application to WRG at the address given on page 2.

If you are stopped by the police, you should tell them that all vehicle documents are held

centrally at the registered office and will be produced on request at Rickmansworth Police Station. If you do not have your licence with you, you will have to travel to Rickmansworth to produce it.



Ensure you are trained before using WRG vehicles.

4.3 SITE PLANT

Mechanical plant, including lifting gear, may only be driven or used by competent persons holding the necessary authorisation card and with the permission of the site leader who must satisfy him/herself that drivers/operators are aware of the correct method of operating the plant.

It is a legal requirement that anyone operating lifting gear of any type must be over 21.

Before you start an item of mechanical plant, always make sure you know how to stop it.

When the plant is being checked, prior to each working day, the most important points to look at are:-

- ✓ Tyres or tracks
- ✓ Steering
- ✓ Brakes
- ✓ Cracks and leaks in the hydraulic hoses and fittings
- ✓ Oil and engine coolant levels and leaks.

All plant and machinery must be kept and maintained in a safe state and in good working order.

You must report any defects to the site leader.

4.4 POINTS TO WATCH

When plant is being operated in a confined space or the operator's view is restricted, the operator must have a competent 'banksman' to guide him/her.

Never reach under the raised body of a tipper lorry or dumper.

Never use plant or equipment for work it has not been designed to do.

When using dumpers or earth-moving plant that has dangerous crush or slew zones, keep clear and ensure that warning notices are displayed.

Never carry passengers unless there is proper provision for them.

Never load a dumper with the engine running.

Never remain seated on a dumper while it is being loaded mechanically e.g. by an excavator or crane.

Never begin loading a dumper mechanically until the dumper driver has stopped the engine, got off and is out of reach of your machine.

Never reach your arm into the drum of a concrete mixer while it is running.

ACCIDENTS

All accidents must be reported at once to the site leader. You should also report and record any 'near miss' incidents as this helps us to make our site safer and reduces risks to future volunteers.

5.1 WHAT TO DO

The following is general information applicable to all sites. Additional information for your site will be provided by the site leader.

In the event of an accident involving personal injury the most important thing is to prevent further injury to the victim and all others on site.

Make plant safe by turning it off and making any adjacent hazards safe.

Carefully support the patient and make comfortable. Keep the patient warm.

5.2 FIRST AID KITS

First aid kits are provided in every accommodation, in WRG vehicles and on every site.

If you injure yourself - use them!

Report all uses of a first aid kit to the site leader who will ensure that replacement items are provided, decide whether you need further attention and whether an accident report form needs to be completed.

Do not remove first aid kits from their proper place.

Take care of first aid kits and keep them clean - you never know when you may need one!

THE INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION AND WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Inland Waterways Association and the Waterway Recovery Group exist to promote a widely-appreciated and well-maintained network of inland waterways available for the benefit of all. This is achieved through a combination of advocacy, education and physical works. We aim to achieve this without adversely affecting anyone's health and safety or causing harm to the natural environment.

The Association is committed to protecting the health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable, of its employees, volunteers, members and the wider public when engaged on activities managed or promoted by the Association and its subsidiary companies.

The Association is committed to achieving these specific health and safety aims:

- ✓ To **prevent accidents** and causes of work related ill-health, and to provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from activities managed or promoted by the Association.
- ✓ To provide appropriate **training, relevant instruction or supervision** by a competent person to ensure employees, volunteers, and members of the Association are able to carry out activities safely.
- ✓ To **promote and clearly communicate health and safety matters** throughout the Association by engaging with employees, volunteers and members using various media including IWA's website, email, printed documentation and videos.
- ✓ To provide **equal standards of protection** to employees, volunteers and members of the Association.
- ✓ To **maintain safe and healthy working conditions** by making available appropriate safety equipment, and ensuring that all plant, vehicles, tools and equipment owned by the Association and subsidiary companies are in good working order.
- ✓ To **collect, consult and analyse information** on accidents, dangerous incidents and work related ill-health in order to review working practices and take action where practicable to prevent any recurrence.

Whilst engaged in any activity managed or promoted by the Association, employees, volunteers, members and visitors are urged, in their own interest and that of their colleagues, to take reasonable care of their own health & safety and observe the Association's health and safety procedures. Any matter which those participating in any activity consider may be hazardous to either health or safety must be brought to the notice of their line manager, leader or other responsible person at the earliest opportunity.

Due to the diverse nature of the Association and its activities, each part of the organisation will put in place systems appropriate to the nature of the personnel and the complexity of the activities being carried out. Day to day responsibility for ensuring this policy's aims are achieved is outlined in the 'IWA Health & Safety – Roles and Responsibilities' document.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains effective in terms of the organisation's structure and activities.

Remember...

MOST OF THIS BOOKLET IS ABOUT SITE SAFETY, BUT MOST ACCIDENTS HAPPEN IN THE HOME (OR IN THIS CASE, THE ACCOMMODATION).

BE SAFE AT ALL TIMES, NOT JUST WHEN WORKING ON SITE!



Always keep your workspace tidy.



*Accident prevention has priority in all aspects of our work.
Where protective equipment is indicated, use it - it is provided for your safety*