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Working Safely

Tool and site safety

Working safely with the National Trust requires the same common sense you would use at home. At the beginning of each work task, you will be given a tool and site safety talk, which will include what to do in an emergency. It is important to follow all instructions given and, if in doubt about **any** detail, ask your supervisor for clarification.

Extra guidelines on potential dangers are given below. We do insist that you read these before you start work with the Trust.

Personal protection

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

When any personal protective equipment is provided, it must be used.

Protect your head

A safety helmet ('hard hat') must be worn for construction work or when there is any danger from falling objects, such as tree branches. These will be provided where appropriate. However, we don't provide sun hats, which are advisable to help prevent sunstroke and sunburn to the face and ears.

Protect your eyes

Safety goggles will always be provided if your job causes dust or flying particles. These shouldn't be worn on top of the head or around the neck – we insist that they must be worn correctly if there is any risk of danger to the eyes.

Protect your ears

On rare occasions you may be exposed to high levels of noise. In such circumstances ear defenders or ear plugs will be provided and must be worn.

Protect your hands

Work gloves are very useful in protecting hands from cuts and blisters. We recommend that you obtain the reinforced cloth variety which are ideal for most tasks and can be purchased from any gardening or hardware store. Special gloves will be provided for litter picking and for tasks involving barbed wire,

etc. But do not wear gloves when swinging wooden-shafted tools in the wet (eg pickaxes, slashers and bill-hooks). Do take extra care when tending bonfires and always remember that paraffin or petrol must never be used on, or to light, any bonfire and, if on site, must be at least 10 metres upwind of the fire.

Protect your back

Lifting and handling loads incorrectly can cause injury and agony. Persistent bad lifting causes strain, which may become severe and prolonged. Pushing and pulling, for example shovelling and dragging, are also included within this guidance.

Whenever possible avoid lifting or handling loads altogether. If mechanical devices or tools are provided, use them whenever practicable. If you have to lift or move a load, always take the following precautions:

- Assess the load. Do you need help? How heavy is it? Can you get a good grip? Plan your route before moving. Allow adequate rest points if carrying the load more than nine metres.
- If you think you need help – ask!
- Is a mechanical aid, such as a barrow, available to help move the load?
- Follow any safe working practice guidelines that have been drawn up.
- Get help if the load is heavy or awkward. Take suitable precautions if the load has splinters, sharp projections or contains hazardous materials.
- When lifting as part of a team, take instructions from one person only. That person should have a clear view of the actions taking place and need not be one of those lifting.

Always lift in the correct manner:

- Place feet a shoulder width apart to provide a stable base, with one foot slightly in front of the other.
- Bend your knees so that your hands are close to waist level when the load is grasped, and keep your back in its natural shape.
- Get a firm grip that will not need to be changed while carrying.

- Lift smoothly, utilising the muscles of your thighs and buttocks, keeping control of the load, and with your back in its natural shape.
- Don't twist your body; move your feet instead.
- Keep the load as close to your body as possible at all times, with the heaviest side closest to the body.
- Avoid lifting above shoulder level or lowering below ground level.

Stop work if you feel any pull or strain: to carry on may result in serious injury.

- To lower a load, reverse the above directions.
- Never walk backwards or run while carrying tools or heavy objects.
- If an injury does occur while lifting or moving a load, report it as soon as possible to the member of staff supervising the task.

Protect your feet

You are strongly advised to wear safety boots with steel toe caps, which are essential for some tasks. Safety footwear prevents many accidents, and can be purchased from National Trust suppliers (ask staff for contact details). Footwear must be tough and sturdy with good soles. Experienced volunteers always recommend breaking them in before use on a task to prevent blisters.

Protect your health

Anyone carrying out practical work in the countryside is **strongly** recommended to have an up-to-date tetanus inoculation.

All cuts and grazes should be covered before work starts. This is especially important if work is being carried out in ditches, rivers and lakes where there may be a risk of Weil's Disease if cuts are unprotected. Wear gloves and don't forget to wash your hands in clean water before eating, drinking or smoking.

Ticks can be common on heathland or in areas of rough vegetation and bracken. Some may carry the bacteria which cause Lyme Disease in humans. To avoid being bitten, keep

your skin covered by wearing long sleeves and long trousers with the bottoms tucked into your socks when working in vegetation. Check for ticks on your clothing and skin at regular intervals. If bitten, remove the tick gently with tweezers while turning in an anticlockwise direction. Tell-tale signs of the disease are a ring-like rash around the bite, together with flu-like symptoms and/or enlarged glands. In this case consult a doctor straightaway and tell them you have had a tick bite.

Tell your supervisor if you are on medication or have any known medical conditions (eg vertigo, asthma, epilepsy, allergies to wasp stings).

We recommend you bring bottled water or squash with you to the work site; and extra if working in hot weather.

Working conditions

Working outdoors

In cold, wet or windy weather, always wear sufficient protective clothing to keep warm and dry, especially in mountain and moorland areas or other exposed sites.

On very hot days avoid the possibility of heat exhaustion by drinking plenty of water, wearing a sun hat which shades the ears and keeping covered with light clothing, particularly when working on sites with little shade.

Avoid the risk of sunburn, which can lead to more serious problems in later life such as skin discoloration, premature ageing or even skin cancer. The paler your skin, the greater is the risk. Be particularly careful around noon when the sun is most intense. Use sunscreen which gives protection against both UVA and UVB rays, and which has a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or more. Apply it liberally and evenly on all exposed skin – even on cloudy days – 15-30 minutes before going out into the sun. Reapply it every two to three hours.

Smoking

We ask those who smoke always to consider the health, comfort and safety of others when 'lighting up'. Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed or partially enclosed public spaces including all buildings and vehicles, within 6 metres of a historic building, within close proximity to stores containing

combustible material and other designated places on National Trust properties. On some outdoor tasks, in dry weather, smoking is likely to be prohibited on the work site. If smoking is allowed, please ensure that cigarette ends, ash and matches are fully extinguished and properly disposed of before leaving the area.

Working on a slope

Take extra care when working on slopes and be particularly careful with tools when left on the ground. These can fall or slide down a slope and injure people working below you. Never walk on a slope immediately above a fire or other people, and never allow cut branches or dislodged stones to slide or roll unattended down a slope.

Working in water

Life jackets will be provided and must be worn when working over or around deep water. Always have someone else with you even if working in shallow water and make sure that you know where the rescue equipment is located in the event of an accident.

Working with hand tools

You will be shown the correct way of handling and carrying hand tools before you start work, but a few valuable points are listed below:

- Use the correct tool for the job.
- Do not use damaged or worn tools.
- Lift and carry tools in a safe manner.
- Keep your hands behind the cutting edge when using a sharp tool.
- Keep a safe working distance from other people when using hand tools such as pickaxes, slashers or bill-hooks.
- Ask your supervisor for a demonstration if in any doubt about tool use.
- Only those who have been properly trained can use hand winches
- Never leave tools in a position where they could injure someone.

Accidents and illness – and how to deal with them

Accidents are very rare on well planned and supervised voluntary work parties, but if someone is injured, or suddenly taken ill, it is vitally important to prevent further injury or distress as follows:

- Make sure you know the procedures for accident and sudden illness at the start of the task.
- Do not move a conscious or unconscious injured or ill person unless they are in a dangerous place. Do make them comfortable and warm, and send for medical help immediately.
- Report the accident or illness as soon as possible to your supervisor and/or first aider.

First aid equipment

First aid kits are supplied by the National Trust, but do find out exactly where they are located on the work site, in the accommodation and in the minibus. Regulation kits have only basic essentials for carrying out first aid, so we suggest you bring your own plasters and any medication necessary for personal use.

Look after your neighbour

We all have an obligation to ensure that any action that we take does not put other volunteers, staff or the public at risk. If you see a hazard or an accident 'waiting to happen', then take action and warn the work party and supervisor straightaway. Be aware of others around you, and remember:

Work safely and come back safe and sound!

We are advised that a tetanus injection is a wise precaution for outdoor working. Please consult your GP.