

2. Health and Safety



This sheet gives guidelines on health and safety, first aid, first aid kits and on doing a risk assessment when running an event or volunteer work party.

It is the responsibility of burial ground managers to consider the safety of the whole site for the casual visitor. These guidelines are for groups running an event or work party as part of a conservation project.

Burial ground and churchyard managers need to think about the health and safety not only of visitors but also people who are volunteering. Cemeteries are likely to be the responsibility of the local authority and in most Anglican sites the Church Council takes the responsibility. This entails ensuring that a burial ground is as safe as is reasonably practicable and care is taken to minimise accidents. The responsible body must comply with health and safety legislation, hold public liability insurance and keep records.

When organising a work party or event you will need to consider the dangers, the associated risks and how to keep people as safe as possible.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment can become a useful check list for event organising; the first one you do takes time but this becomes quicker.

Site risk assessment

Start by looking at the site systematically, trying to imagine visiting it for the first time:

Paths and entrances – are paths even or uneven? Are any steps clearly visible? If there are railings by steps



are they strong enough, smooth or sharp, are there any broken sections?

Areas away from paths – what is the rest of the site like? Is the ground uneven? Are there stones that could trip, gravestones that are not clearly visible, brambles or nettles?

Stonework and monuments – are any of these unstable? Are graves surrounded by sharp railings?

Trees – are the trees safe, have you acted on recommendations from tree surveys? Do they have low, sharp branches or stumps? Are they poisonous?



Scots Pine

Activity risk assessment

Look at the activity planned - what tools or equipment will be used? What is the range of ages and abilities of participants?

Tools – will there be sharp tools? If so list them. What about heavy or awkward tools? This could be cutting tools, sledge hammers, mowers.

Other equipment – will there be heavy things to lift, things to trip over? Are you planning to have a fire or boiling water?

The activity – what and where will people be working and what level of skill or training is needed? Will people be doing an activity for the first time or do you know that they have prior experience?

Are there particular risks with an activity: inappropriate tool use, lifting heavy or awkward objects, a need for space around the person? (Sledgehammer or strimmer use for example).

Will works be near or on a path or a road?

At the end of this process you will be feeling that the whole site is terribly dangerous, the activity that you are planning is potentially lethal and no one should be allowed onto your site! Hopefully the next stage will put risks into proportion.

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Risk level

You now need to calculate risk level. You should consider both the probability of an accident occurring and the severity if it does, giving them both a rating between 1 and 4.

Probability = P

1. Improbable / unlikely to occur
2. Possible / could occur sometimes
3. Probable / will occur several times
4. Likely to occur / event expected

Severity = S

This is the worst likely outcome assuming no controls are in place:

1. Minor injury, e.g. cuts, bruises, sprains, minor burns.
2. Major injury but non-life threatening, e.g. fractures, dislocations, muscle strains, cuts, burns or disease needing medical attention.
3. Major injury which could be life threatening, e.g. loss of limb, major fracture, major disease, exposure or hypothermia, penetrating eye injury.
4. Fatality: the death of a volunteer, contractor or member of public.

Probability x Severity	=	Level of Risk	P x S = R
Levels of risk, 1 to 4	=	Low risk	
Levels of risk, 6	=	Medium Risk	
Levels of risk, 8 to 16	=	High Risk	

Probability	Severity			
	1	2	3	4
1	1	2	3	4
2	2	4	6	8
3	3	6	9	12
4	4	8	12	16

Example 1 – The probability of injury whilst nailing a fence may be likely (probability value of 4) but the potential outcome is a minor injury (severity level is 1). $P \times S = R$, hence $4 \times 1 = 4$.

The level of risk with this activity is LOW (4).

Example 2 – Injury whilst having a bonfire might be regarded as probable (probability value of 4), but the potential outcome is major but non-life threatening, (severity of 2). $P \times S = R$, hence $4 \times 2 = 8$. The level of risk with this activity is HIGH (8).

N.B. You must show your calculation on the form.

The risk level relates to the hazard before you apply precautions to reduce the risk.

You now need to think how you will minimise the chance of injury taking place.

Example 1 – Nailing a fence. This is a low risk but you could reduce it further by suggesting that people wear strong gardening gloves. You could also warn people to take care of fingers.

Example 2 – Having a bonfire. This high risk is lowered if you do it in the right conditions, take precautions and have enough space. This will lower the probability from likely to possible and therefore reduce the risk to $LOW\ 2 \times 2 = 4$. If, when you do the risk assessment, you assess that there is not enough space to have a fire safely then the risk remains unacceptably high and the task should not go ahead.

Describe what precautions you will take to reduce risk, who will do them and when.

Recalculate the risk based on these precautions and see if it has become medium or low.

If it is still high then DON'T DO IT. If it is medium then think carefully before going ahead.

Several of the precautions are to be done by a 'task leader'. It is best to have someone to plan each event and lead on it. The leader should write the risk assessment, plan the precautions and explain them to the others. This may be a case of contacting people in advance and telling them to wear long sleeved clothes and strong boots, or of showing them particular hazards on the day.

See table on page opposite for some examples from an actual churchyard task risk assessment.

The full Risk Assessment form is available on the Caring for God's Acre website. It contains space for additional information such as grid references and emergency phone numbers.



First aid kit

The first aid kit should contain contents suitable for the number of people and the risks identified (e.g. lots of sterile eye wash if dealing with lime mortar).

Volunteers should be briefed at the start of the session as to the risks associated with the work/event, the provision and location of the first aid kit(s), who is the trained first aider and where the emergency phone is sited.

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For more information on the recommended contents of first aid kit(s) contact [St. John Ambulance](#) or the [Red Cross](#).

KEEP RECORDS

Take a paper copy of the risk assessment and emergency contact form to the event.

Keep a file with all of your risk assessments in it. The site manager or church officials may want to store this file for you as it is a useful record for them.

Accident book

Keep a record of accidents and near misses. This can be a notebook with a pencil attached which is kept on site. Record the accident (including minor ones), the name of the injured person, the date, time of day and any particular conditions such as low light, rain or slippery ground. Near misses often go unrecorded but can give really useful insight. Use common sense when deciding what to record.

Example: 'Slipped badly whilst carrying sharp tools but managed not to fall'.



The table below gives some examples of how to assess initially, plan your precautions and then reassess.

Hazards	Type of risk	Risk level PxS=R	Precautions to remove hazard or reduce risk	Who?	When? Before During	New risk level
Uneven	Trip & slip	2x2=4	Inspect working area for specific hazard areas. Warn about uneven ground.	Task leader	B	1x2=2 Low
Steep drop	Fall and injury	2x2=4 High	Point out drop and reinforce the need to keep area clear of trip hazards (e.g. tools, coats).	Task leader	B & D	1x4=4 Low
Gravestones	Gravestone falling and injury	2x4=8 High	Check for unstable stones. If present then warn participants to keep away from these. Corner off if appropriate.	Task leader	B & D	1x4=4 Low
Bonfire	Burns	4x2=8 High	Do not burn if very windy. Wear gloves, long sleeves and cover legs. Make sure fire is supervised. Position fire away from uneven ground and keep tidy. Use tools to manage fire and keep your distance. Keep water carrier near. Make sure fire is out at end of day.	Task leader & vols	B & D	2x2=4 Low
Bonfire	Smoke inhalation, eyes	3x2=6 Med	Work upwind of fire Do not light if too windy or burning towards work site.	Task leader & vols	D	2x1=2 Low

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REVIEW

One of the five steps to a successful burial ground project is an annual meeting and a review of the work and how volunteers are feeling (see sheet A1, The Five Steps).

During this meeting it is useful to review health and safety:

Consider:

- Do you have sufficient first aid training within your group?
- Would anybody like to do the training?
- Does the group have access to a landline or (working!) mobile phone to contact emergency services if needed?

- Has the first aid kit been used and has it been replenished as needed?
- Have risk assessments been carried out for all events and are there now copies in a file?
- Are you collecting emergency contact numbers of people who regularly volunteer?
- Are there any patterns emerging in the accident book?

For example:

If accidents happen in the last hour of the work day then consider stopping tasks earlier.

Lots of minor cuts occur when using a particular tool so do you need a new or different tool?



Useful contacts

British Red Cross, www.redcross.org.uk

Church of England, ChurchCare, www.churchcare.co.uk

Church in Wales, www.churchinwales.org.uk/resources/property

Health and Safety Executive, www.hse.gov.uk

St John Ambulance, www.sja.org.uk

Your insurance company!

Useful reading

Caring for God's Acre for risk assessment forms – www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside – Principles and Practice, York Publishing