

## 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

Doing a risk assessment sounds like a very scary undertaking, but it is largely a matter of looking at your site, using your common sense and recording your findings.

The first step is to take a hard look at your site and the activities you are planning and think about what might cause harm (these are called the hazards.)

#### 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?

**Who could be harmed?** – could the activity cause harm to the participants or members of the public or to anyone else?

At the end of this process you will be feeling that the

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whole site is terribly dangerous, the activity that you are planning is potentially lethal and no one should be allowed anywhere near either of them! Hopefully the next stage will put risks into proportion.

The table below is based on one recommended by the Health & Safety Executive and has been partially filled out to give you some examples. **This is a template example only and must be filled out specifically for your burial ground or activity.**

**Activity/event assessed:**

**Date of activity/event:**

**Location:**

**Nearest hospital:**

**First aider on site?:**

**First aid kit on site?:**

**Assessment carried out by:**

**Date assessment carried out:**

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Trips & slips – uneven paths	Trips and slips	Warn participants and point out any specific	Warn participants to wear stout non-slip shoes	Task leader	Before	Tick or initial when done
Trips & slips – nettles & brambles	Participants could fall	Point out risky areas	Consider barriers if necessary	Task leader	Before	Tick or initial
Stings, thorns, scratches, allergies	Participants could be stung, scratched or have allergic reaction to plants	Warn of risks including identification of problem plants	Recommend long sleeves, trousers	Task leader	Before	Tick or initial
Unstable headstones	Participants could be hurt by falling headstones	Point out unstable headstones	Consider barriers if necessary	Task leader	Before	Tick or initial
Sharp tools – list them here	Participants & public could receive cuts	Instruct participants on safe use	Ensure public don't have access to tools	Task leader or designated person	Before & during	Tick or initial
Bonfire	Participants & public could receive burns or smoke inhalation	Take note of weather conditions e.g. wind	Ensure location is suitable & bonfire is supervised at all times	Task leader or designated person	Before & during	Tick or initial
Adverse weather conditions	Participants could get wet or very windy conditions could be unsafe	Advise attendees to dress suitably including footwear	If conditions warrant consider postponing or cancellation	Task leader or designated person	Before & during	Tick or initial
Etc						

These are all probably measures that you would take anyway, but not all participants may be as familiar with your burial ground as you are. They may need warning of, for example, a drop to the pavement below where the boundary wall is above the height of the surrounding area, or if there are some particularly sharp railings surrounding one grave.

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#### Keep records

Take a paper copy of the risk assessment and 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. There should be a separate page for each entry to avoid accidental sharing of personal information such as contact or medical details. 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 insights. Use common sense when deciding what to record. Example: 'Slipped badly whilst carrying sharp tools but managed not to fall'.

#### 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.

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

#### 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 if needed?
- Have risk assessments been carried out for all new activities and events and are there copies in a file?
- Are you collecting emergency contact numbers for people who regularly volunteer and keeping them securely?
- Are there any patterns emerging in the accident book?  
For example:
  - If accidents happen in the last hour of the work day consider stopping tasks earlier.
  - If lots of minor cuts occur when using a particular tool do you need a replacement or different tool?

#### Useful contacts

British Red Cross, [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

Church of England, ChurchCare, [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)

Church in Wales, [www.churchinwales.org.uk/resources/property](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/resources/property)

Health and Safety Executive, [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

St John Ambulance, [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

Your insurance company!

#### Useful reading

Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside – Principles and Practice, Visitor Safety Group

