



VOLUNTEER HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE



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USEFUL INFORMATION

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



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

The contact address for all WRG Health and Safety matters, including Driver Authorisation, requests for further copies of this booklet and the address for accident and near miss reports to be sent to is: Waterway Recovery Group, Unit 16B Chiltern Court, Asheridge Road, Chesham, HP5 2PX

enquiries@wrg.org.uk

Thank you for volunteering to work with us. Remember, this booklet is about site safety, but most accidents happen at home. Be safe at all times, not just when working on site.

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 a construction site that presents hazards to you, your fellow volunteers and members of the public. It is 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 and Safety.

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

It represents only the first part of your Health and 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. A Project Plan will exist for the project - you should consult this whenever you have a query; if you are unsure or have concerns you should ask the Site Leader.

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 look forward to welcoming you to our site and wish you a thoroughly enjoyable time.



THINK SAFETY - ACT SAFELY

1.1 GENERAL WORK HABITS

Many accidents occur as a result of poor site tidiness; a tidy site is a safe site. Keeping the work site tidy not only reduces accidents through eliminating physical hazards, but allows volunteers to operate more effectively and safely.

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 present a hazard to yourself or others, for example on top of a wall or laying 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. They should never be over-stacked so that they become a potential falling hazard.

1.2 BEFORE YOU START A JOB

Make sure you understand what you are being asked to do, what tools and materials you will need and what hazards are associated with the work.

- Consult the risk assessment and method statement and follow instructions given by the Site Leader.
- Use the right tool for the job; improvised tools cause accidents.
- Plan the work fully before you start. Always follow the advice in the risk assessment and method statement, if in doubt ask.
- Make sure you have the correct personal protective equipment and that you know how to use it.

1.3 SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Slips, trips and falls can be caused by unsuitable site footwear, inattention or by neglect of the principles in section 1.1.

- Keep your eyes and mind on the work in hand.
- 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 and egress 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 (PPE)

2.1 PERSONAL PROTECTION

During the planning of the work your Site Leader will introduce measures to control hazards that you may be exposed to on site. However some control measures will require you to wear personal protective equipment. Make sure that you have the correct type of protective equipment for the job. Always take good care of protective clothing and all other equipment required for your safety. Your Site Leader will provide you with all mandatory safety and other equipment for the work you are doing and other safety equipment for specific tasks.

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 Project Plan. In practice, almost all WRG work 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 such as wind-borne dust, fragments of debris during demolition or brick cleaning, stones and litter when strimming, splashes when placing wet concrete or mortar and wood chips when a chainsaw is being used. 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.

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, 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. Remove thoroughly with soap, water and rinse well. Do not use petrol, paraffin or abrasives to clean your skin as they can cause skin irritations and dermatitis.

2.5 PROTECTION OF FEET

You are required to provide and wear safety boots or shoes with toe and sole protection they have prevented crippling accidents on our sites.

For those working on muddy or wet sites, the use of steel toe cap wellington boots is recommended. The Site Leader will ensure that only people wearing appropriate foot protection will be permitted work in a wet environment, such as a ditch or stream.

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 one, you must wear ear protection.
- Consider other people when you are using noisy machinery and site your work away from other volunteers and members of the public. Ensure 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 others close to you, the noise level is too high and you should be wearing hearing protection.

2.7 PROTECTION FROM THE WEATHER

Take precautions against the effects of weather conditions and dress appropriately:

- Make sure you wear suitable waterproof clothing in wet weather. Waterproof trousers may be appropriate in some situations. Remember to dry your wet clothes out after use.
- In hot weather use sun protection cream on exposed skin, cover yourself if you have sensitive skin 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.

2.8 PROTECTION FROM VEHICLE IMPACT

On WRG sites it is compulsory to wear a high visibility (hi-vis) vest or jacket. It allows you to be seen more easily, particularly where plant is operating or when you are working in a public space.

The WRG hi-vis vests are branded to show that you are a volunteer working for WRG. Members of the public will often want to talk to you about what you are doing and you may encourage them to volunteer in the future.

2.9 PROTECTION OF **BREATHING**

Activities such as brick cutting and cement mixing create dust that can be harmful when breathed in. When you are engaged in these activities you must wear a dusk mask. Your Site Leader will provide the dust mask and show you how to wear it to protect you from airborne dust.

SITE HAZARDS

3.1 SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH

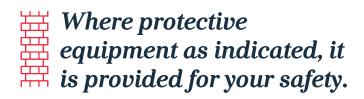
On a site you will encounter many substances which, if not properly handled, may injure your health. These may include fuel, oils, greases, paints, cement/concrete and lime/lime mortar.

Information on the hazardous substances will be available in the Project Plan and COSHH Assessment sheets in the site document case. Your Site Leader will give you advice about how to use these substances.

Cement and lime 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 wet cement/lime 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 & LIFTING

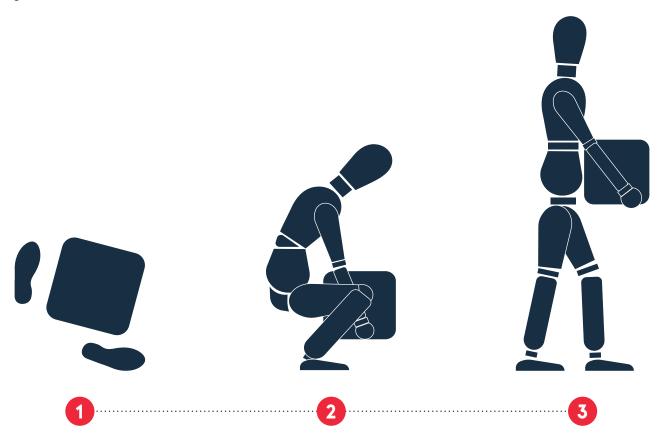
Correct manual lifting and handling of a load prevent strain and reduce effort. The persistent use of bad lifting methods cause strains, which may eventually become severe. Handling includes pushing, pulling, dragging or shoveling any load.

When lifting a load, always:

- Plan the whole lifting or handling operation (include putting the object down safely) before you start.
- Make sure your path is clear.
- Get help if you think the load is beyond your capacity or is awkward in shape or position.
- Use mechanical assistance if it is available.
- Look out for splinters, projecting nails, wire or sharp edges.
- Wear gloves when handling materials.
- Stop working immediately if you feel a strain.
- When working in a gang, take your instructions from one person only.

Lift in easy stages:

- Adopt a stable position; feet apart, one leg slightly forward to maintain balance.
- Get a firm grip on the load.
- Lift with your legs keeping your back as straight as possible.
- Keep the load close to the waist with the heaviest side against the body.
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways.
- Keep the head up when handling.
- Move smoothly and avoid jerking.
- Put the load down before adjusting it into position.



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.
- Where practicable 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. Before you start a power tool, always make sure you know how to stop it. Always wear the correct protective clothing.

If a power tool breaks down take it to the Site Leader for repair or replacement.

3.5 HAND ARM VIBRATION

Vibration is transmitted into your hands and arms when you are using hand held work equipment or where you are holding work pieces that vibrate. Prolonged exposure to vibration affects blood vessels, muscles, joints of the hand, wrist and arm causing pain, tingling, numbness and weakness of the hand and arm.

In order to avoid excessive exposure to vibration you should limit the time spent using vibrating equipment. Your Site Leader will ensure job rotation so that you are not likely to suffer the effects of vibration. If you experience pain, tingling or numbness report it to you Site Leader and carry out a different task.

3.6 WORKING AT HEIGHT

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of injury on a construction site. Working at height means working in any place where you could fall a distance likely to cause injury and includes access routes. Another cause of injury when working at height is the dropping of objects that cause injury to others.

The risk assessment will identify the method for controlling any work at height and your Site Leader will provide a thorough briefing during the safety talk at the start of the work party. You must follow any guidance given and not interfere with any safeguards put in place to protect the volunteers. If you are working at height and there are no safety measures in place you must STOP.

Here are examples of where you would expect to be working at height:

- Working at the top of an empty lock chamber.
- Working on top of a bridge.

- Working on a constructed towpath above the canal bed.
- Working alongside an open excavation or by-wash channel.
- Anything involving ladders, scaffold, trestles or Mobile Elevated Working Platforms.
- Climbing trees to assist with the felling.
- Standing on the flat bed of a delivery lorry.

3.7 WORKING NEAR WATER

The obvious hazard when working near water is immersion and possible drowning, but entering the water may cause shock, fatigue or hypothermia if rescue is not immediate. When working near water there will be a safe system of work set up and your Site Leader will provide you with full details during the safety briefing at the start of the work party. You may be required to wear a life jacket and you should make sure you know how to fit and adjust it before starting work. Additional safety equipment will be available, such as throw lines, in order to rescue anyone who falls into the water.

Main causes for entering the water:

- Slips trips and falls.
- Falls from height.
- Person being knocked over by moving object or person.
- Loss of balance.
- Failure or absence of edge barrier.
- Failure or absence of fall prevention equipment.
- Floating platforms or vessels sinking or incorrectly secured.

3.8 WEIL'S DISEASE (LEPTOSPYROSIS)

Weil's Disease can be caught by people who work in or near water. It is carried by infected 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 them that you have been working in an environment where Weil's Disease is a possibility. This will allow correct treatment to be given.

3.9 FIRE PREVENTION & CONTROL

3.6.1 FIRE PREVENTION

- Fire prevention is the key objective. General site tidiness will go a long way towards preventing fires. Flammable rubbish, such as paper and oily rags, 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 trenches and lock chambers filling with dense fumes.
- away from the work site and be very careful when discarding cigarettes.

3.6.2 BONFIRE SAFETY

Bonfires can be a safe method of disposing of cut down vegetation on site if you follow these safety. Bonfires require an Environment Agency permit and there are limitations what can be burnt. 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, 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 dowse the fire and make sure it is extinguished 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 extinguished one hour before leaving site.

3.6.3 DEALING WITH FIRES & 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, 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.
- volunteers get to a place of safety away from the fire.
- 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 plenty of clean cold water.

 Do not attempt to remove burnt clothing. Seek medical attention.



WRG VEHICLES, PLANT & EQUIPMENT

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 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 a copy of your driving licence.

Any driver must:

 Be authorised to drive that class of vehicle under WRG's Driver Authorisation Scheme.

- Have provided a DVLA check code (see https://www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence) to Head Office along with the number of your driving licence, within the past 12 months, so that your driving entitlement and lack of penalty points can be checked.
- Be familiar with that make and model of vehicle, or be given a demonstration, and taken for a test drive, by another competent driver who is familiar with that make and model.
- Have no penalty points, save for a maximum of one SP30 endorsement.
- Have no limitations to your driving licence imposed by DVLA as a consequence of medical conditions.
- Have no special terms imposed on you as a driver by your own insurers or your employer's insurers.
- Be authorised by the site leader, or if there is no site leader, then by the keeper of that vehicle.
- 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, it is likely they will have instant access to your DVLA record and insurance cover for the vehicle through the Motor Insurers Database. In the unlikely event that this is not the case, an electronic copy of evidence of insurance can be provided to you from Head Office or by application to insurance@waterways.org.uk, which you will then need to take to a police station along with your driving licence.

If you are to drive an agricultural vehicle or item of motorised plant (that is designed for use on the public highway) either on a metalled road or on a footpath, byway or bridleway or in an area customarily used by the public, then before doing so you should check (with the site leader or keeper of the vehicle) that the vehicle or item of plant is insured under a Motor Policy for such use.

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 themselves 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.
- Fuel level.

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.

4.5 SITE EQUIPMENT

On a WRG site you may be required to use items of equipment to carry out your work. Make sure that you have received training in how to use the equipment before you start. For powered equipment make sure you know how to stop it. For petrol or diesel powered equipment make sure the engine has cooled before topping up with fuel. Use a funnel when refueling and have a spill kit available. Fuel is a hazardous material and splashes should be washed off the skin immediately.

Your Site Leader or somebody who has been trained to use the equipment will be on hand to give you advice.

Here are some items of equipment you may have to use:

Cement mixer

Cement mixers are used to take some of the hard work out of mixing concrete and mortar. Make sure the mixer is set up correctly and is placed near the materials to minimize lifting and twisting. Cement and lime dust is hazardous, you must wear a properly fitted face mask during mixing. Don't stand in front of the mixer, the wet mix can splash from the mixer. The wash water from the drum should be disposed to a suitable area away from any watercourse. Don't put hands or spades in the rotating drum.

Generator

WRG sites are usually remote from power supplies and a generator is required to provide electric power. Site the generator away from other volunteers and public areas and use extension leads to the equipment. Generators are noisy and you may need ear protection when working near one.

Brick saw

Cutting some bricks/stone/concrete may require the use of a brick saw. Make sure the brick saw is fitted with a dust suppression unit and wear a properly fitted dusk mask during operation. Only cut in a designated area away from other volunteers. The brick saw generates noise and vibration. Wear ear protection and limit the length of time that you use it.

Brush cutter or strimmer

Brush cutters are used for cutting back vegetation. They should be used away from other volunteers as they can throw up cuttings and other debris. You will need to wear long clothing and face and ear protection when using a brush cutter. The brush cutter generates vibration so limit the length of time that you use it.

Tirfor

These machines and their sundry items must always be operated by experienced volunteers who have been trained in their use. When using a Tirfor ensure that all items being used are in good condition and are fit for purpose. You must wear suitable gloves when handling cables. Only operate a Tirfor in plenty of space and follow any instructions given. The Tirfor should never be overloaded and you should use the correct handle. Never step over a loaded cable.

Plate compactor or roller

These items of equipment are used to compact materials and generate vibration, so limit the time spent using them. Always work from behind the equipment and keep away from other volunteers.

4.6 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 them.

- 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.



ACCIDENTS

All accidents must be reported at once to the Site Leader. Your Site Leader will write and send a record to WRG head office 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 casualty and all others on site. Make plant safe by turning it off and making any adjacent hazards safe.

Carefully support and keep the casualty warm and comfortable.

A near miss incident is when something happens that could have resulted in an injury or damage but didn't, for instance not wearing a face mask when using a mixer or a stumble up steps. The site document case has a supply of near miss cards that can be filled out and sent to WRG head office.

5.2 FIRST AID KITS

First aid kits are provided 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. An accident report form needs to be completed in the Accident Book located with the site first aid kit.

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 WATERWAY ASSOCIATION AND WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP HEALTH & 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.

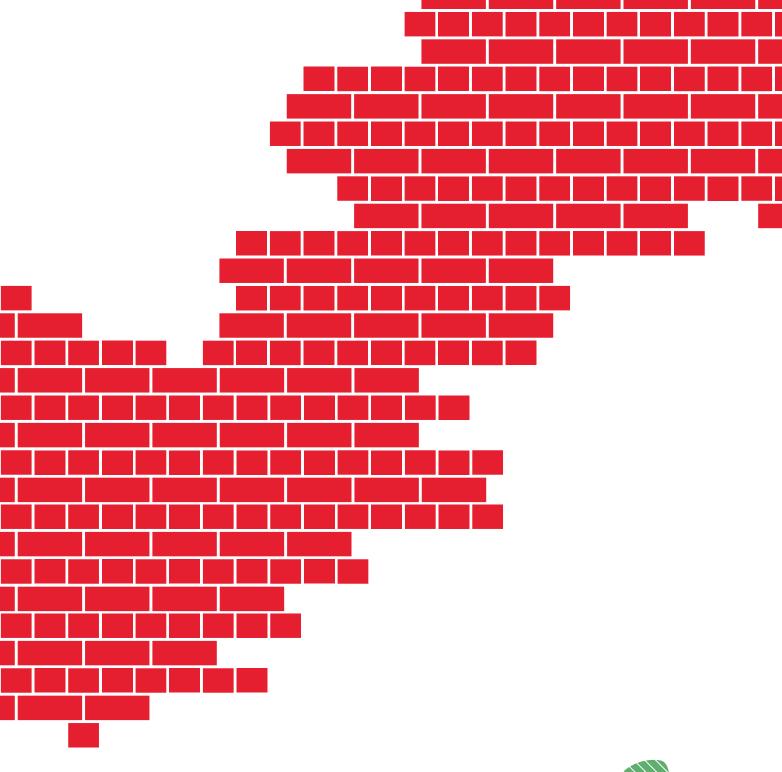
- To promote and clearly communicate
 Health and Safety matters throughout
 the Association by engaging with
 employees, volunteers and members
 using various media including IWA's
 website, email, printed documentation
 and videos.
- To provide **equal standards of protection** to employees, volunteers 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 were 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 and 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 and 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.







Waterway Recovery Group is part of the Inland Waterways Association registered office: Unit 16B, Chiltern Court, Asheridge Road, Chesham, HP5 2PX The Inland Waterways Association is a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee, registered in England no 612245 and registered as a charity no 212342.

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