

Guidelines For Risk Assessment For Scout Premises



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Legal basis

The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HASAWA) applies to all people employed at work as does the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992 which identifies Risk Assessment as being a valuable tool in decreasing the chance of an injury or ill health occurring.

So the perception could be that since a Scout Group does not normally have any paid employees this legislation does not apply. Certain parts of the HASAWA do however apply to volunteers and other members of the public on Scout premises.

It may happen that the Group has hired someone on a regular basis for example to clean the premises. In these cases if the Group has not hired that person as an employee but as a contractor for service the full implications of the HASAWA will not come into play. In case of doubt seek legal advice.

Additionally everyone in England and Wales owes a common law duty of care not to cause injury to another person or to damage another's property. For the cleaner mentioned in the previous paragraph this means the Scout Group telling them the potential hazards of the place being cleaned and the cleaner telling them how they are going to do the job and any hazards they may be introducing in the form of chemicals or equipment.

It would be hard to justify however having lower standards of health, safety and welfare for volunteers compared to paid staff simply because the law does not demand it. In any event complying with the regulations so far as is reasonably practicable will go a long way to ensuring that if an injury is sustained a Scout Group can defend itself against any action for compensation or criminal prosecution.

The term 'so far as is reasonably practicable' recurs throughout health and safety legislation. In broad terms this involves balancing the degree of risk or its potential seriousness against the money, time or trouble in minimising the risk. In other words, if the risk or likelihood of injury or harm is insignificant and it would be very expensive to take precautions, such measures are likely to be deemed not reasonably practicable. A possible example of this criteria could be the cost of putting in measures to ensure that no one ever experiences paper cuts to their fingers.

Adoption of a risk assessment approach for items connected with a Scout premises or its activities are good practice to ensure that conditions are safe.

Scenario

The next sections go through a risk assessment approach for a Scout Group that has the following:-

- a) a headquarter's building with a meeting hall, storage, kitchens, toilet facilities
- b) stores liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders
- c) has a minibus/transport
- d) some associated land
- e) besides Scout activities it could be let out to playgroups, subject to appropriate planning and landlord consents being obtained, used for jumble sales, bingo evenings or discos. In the case of a disco the affect of noise pollution on one's neighbours must be considered.

How to do the risk assessment

Risk assessments are a proactive approach to lessen the chance of an untoward event ever happening and is used to identify possible problems and situations that could cause harm. It identifies things or activities which could cause harm (hazards) and evaluates the associated risk which is a combination of the likelihood of the hazard being realised and the severity of its outcome. Armed with this information decisions can be made on how the risk is to be controlled.

Safety awareness is essentially common sense and a risk assessment is just a structured approach to something that in everyday life one does automatically e.g. checking the car is not in gear before starting the engine, locking the doors and closing the windows before leaving the house, looking before you cross the road etc.

It is recommended that the findings of the risk assessment are written down (see Appendix 2 for a typical form layout) unless it is so simple that it can easily be repeated. If any item in the Risk Assessment changes the process must be repeated. In any case before using an existing Risk Assessment it must be reviewed to ensure that there are no new hazards and that the present controls are adequate.

Recording of Risk Assessments

It is recommended and good practice to ensure that copies of the risk assessments are kept e.g. held with other Group records and the place of use so that they can be readily updated as necessary.

Hazard Identification

This is simply an acknowledgement of everything that has the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment.

Consideration for the weather, of the surrounding environment, for the activities or things going on nearby, the time of the year or day forms part of the hazard identification process. This is because they may be hazards in their own right or affect the likelihood of another hazard being activated. For example, canoeing on a sunny summer's day as opposed to doing it in winter or at night.

Risk evaluation

Once the hazards have been identified the risks associated with each hazard must be evaluated. This must take into account the likelihood of exposure to the hazard and the severity of the outcome e.g. how many people could be affected or the cost in monetary and time terms of it.

Determination of control measures

The purpose of the risk assessment is to identify the control measures needed to eliminate the risk entirely or to reduce it to an acceptable level. Possible control measures may include training, doing it in a different way or not doing it at all, using warning signs to indicate a hazard or the use of protective clothing.

Checklists

The checklists that follow are not exhaustive but list possible hazards, some of their associated risks and suggestions for appropriate control measures. In some cases they draw on incidents reported to the Scout Insurance department in Lancing. Every Scout premises will be different but the only way to discover your hazards is to go and have a look. A physical inspection is required so that all the hazards and their associated risks are identified and appropriate control measures adopted and put into place.

Appendices

Appendix 1:- Other sources of information that may be of use.

Appendix 2:- Possible layout for Risk Assessment form

Hazard	Risk	Possible Control Measures
<u>Building construction:-</u>		
Fragile roof	Falling through it	No ready means of access. Warning signs e.g. "Danger Fragile roof Use crawling boards"
Asbestos roof	Falling through it, also if demolished or damaged could give rise to asbestos dust - health & environmental risk.	Before repairing it, replacing it, drilling it seek advice of local environment officer.
Blocked drainpipes, gutters, drains	Makes ground slippery, slip if freezes	Regular inspection, cleaning out.
Windows	Broken glass, forced entry	Consider using wire mesh or 'Makrolon' sheet to lessen risk of breakage by vandalism, locks.
Not maintained	Deterioration in fabric, loss of facility	Arrangements for maintaining
Upgrading of facilities - eg new heating system, internal modifications	Insurance cover not adjusted, allowance for preventative maintenance not made	Increase insurance cover, planned maintenance schedule.
Internal window sills	At 'head height' for Cubs and Beavers and they can run/walk into them causing injury.	Chisel them off flush to wall or pad them to lessen injury.
<u>Services:-</u>		
Gas supply	Explosion, fire, asphyxiation	Use *HSE approved gas fitter (CORGI registered) for work on fittings/appliances. Isolation valve turned off on vacating premises. Preventative maintenance.
Water	Leaks, burst pipes	Lag pipes, regular checks, consider draining system if appropriate in winter.
Sewer and waste water pipes	Leaks, blockage, health hazard	Training in correct use, regular inspection
Central heating boilers/hot water system	Malfunction, release of flue gases to building interior, loss of use	Regular maintenance by competent persons. Install carbon monoxide alarm.
Electricity -overloaded sockets, trailing leads, damaged leads or plugs.	Electrocution, fire, tripping	Check leads, plugs, equipment regularly. If anything substandard, remove from use & employ competent person for repair. Unplug equipment & isolate supply on leaving building.

* HSE Health & Safety Executive. CORGI Council for Registered Gas Installers

Hazard	Risk	Possible Control Measures
<u>Access/exit routes (internal & external):-</u> Obstructed, unlit, in poor repair, uneven, locked "fire exits"	Trips, confusion possible loss of life or injury in emergency	Keep clear, maintain, ensure fire exits are accessible at all times and nothing blocks fire exit door on outside. Fire exit signed. Practice fire drill regularly.
<u>Combustible material:-</u> Curtains, furniture, rubbish or anything that could be fuel in a fire	Injury, damage, loss of facility	Adequate insurance Smoking policy, arrangements for removal of rubbish, check building before vacating.
<u>Smoking</u>	Fire risk. Possible ill-health effects from passive smoking, image of movement, affect on people with e.g. asthma	Implement a "No Smoking" policy
<u>Storeroom:-</u>		
Paint, decorative finishes, wood preservatives type products	Fire risk, health effects, pollution	Store minimum amounts of flammables in metal cabinet away from sources of ignition. Consider using water based ones. Read label before use, need Risk assessment for painting. Use in well ventilated area. Do not dispose of old paint/solvent washings of brushes etc. down drain or into watercourses.
Equipment e.g. dirty cooking equipment	Health risk, attract vermin	Inspect before storing
Tents, tent pegs, canvas items stored wet	Mildew, rot	Dry before storage, wetproofing regime
Access equipment e.g. ladders not fit for purpose i.e. damaged, warped	Break rung in use leading to fall	Need risk assessment for use of ladders/access equipment coupled with regular inspection of ladders etc.

Hazard	Risk	Possible Control Measures
<u>Gas cylinders:-</u>		
Liquefied petroleum gas, butane/propane and associated appliances	Fire risk from leaks, vapour heavier than air so can collect in "pits" or near floor, wrong cylinder in wrong appliance, rubber hoses in poor condition.	Training, check before use. No flames, no smoking, have good ventilation when changing cylinders. Store spare cylinders securely outside on area free of combustible material but not below ground level, away from drains & keep upright.
<u>Toilets, washing facilities, showers:-</u>		
Unclean, legionella organism in water supply	Health risk	Regular inspection & cleaning regime including descaling and disinfection of shower heads. Maintain supply of soap, toilet paper, drying facilities.
Toilet cleaners, chemical cleaners. Could be corrosive, irritant	Mixing of incompatible ones could release toxic fumes with associated health risk May cause burns, irritate skin, splash into eye/face	*COSHH risk assessment required & applies to all chemicals at facility. Secure storage of any dangerous substances. Training, read labels.
Hot water	Scalding	Adjust thermostat, warning notices
<u>Fire by Arson</u>		
	Damage, loss of facility	Adequate insurance. Fences, locked gates in good repair, good housekeeping. Consider installation of 'security lighting'
<u>Asbestos Fire Blankets</u>		
	Release of asbestos fibres to environment & health hazard	Dispose of asbestos blanket via a licensed waste disposal company not with domestic waste. Contact regional Environment Agency office for advice. Replace with glassfibre blanket.
<u>Tables & Chairs</u>		
Inappropriately stacked for storage, obstructing floor area, corridors or exit routes.	People or children can collide/slide into them or trip causing injury.	Store away from activity area or secure them and put padding round them to lessen risk of injury from sharp edges or feet of stacked chairs

* COSHH. Control Of Substances Hazardous To Health Regulations

Hazard	Risk	Possible Control Measures
<u>Kitchen:-</u>		
Knives, electric kettles, fridges, spills of food or water. Poor housekeeping.	Cuts, risk of fire. Vermin being attracted by food, slip hazard from spills, risk of food poisoning	Training. Regular defrosting of fridges, food segregation, keep food in sealed containers, regular removal of unwanted/out of date food items. Check electrical equipment regularly. Clean up spills promptly. Fire blanket. Consider banning deep fat fryers. Consider installing smoke detector alarm.
Breakages of glasses, crockery	Risk of cuts on clearing up and to subsequent handler of 'rubbish bag'	Wear protective clothing, separately wrap before disposal so sharp edges do not pierce bag and cause injury.
Drinking water not labelled (anywhere in premises)	Health risk	Label as appropriate also label water supply unsuitable to drink
<u>Surrounding land:-</u>		
Grass, rubbish, uneven ground	Long grass promotes risk of fire, injuries from slipping, tripping	Regular grasscutting & maintenance, housekeeping
<u>Minibus/transport vehicles:-</u>		
Inexperienced driver, inadequate insurance, not maintained, overloading, excessive driving hours	Breakdown, accident causing damage, risk of injury	Training, policy governing use, maintenance, who may drive. Appropriate insurance cover
<u>Manual Handling:</u>		
e.g. moving furniture, pieces of equipment, lifting rucksacks/kitbags	Risk of injury, permanent disability	Training, be aware of people with existing medical problems, use mechanical aids e.g. trollies. Do a Manual Handling Assessment.
<u>Vandalism & Theft</u>	Damage, loss of facilities	Contact local Police Crime Prevention Officer for advice. Security lighting, regular checks, secure fencing.

* COSHH Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations

Other Items

Asbestos Disposal

Just to further clarify what is in the table. The greatest health risk from asbestos is from inhalation of the fibres. If the material such as a roofing sheet is undamaged there is little risk of fibres being released but there is a greater risk if one drills a hole or cuts it or it has been damaged in some way.

One way to minimise the release of dust is to wet down the area before starting work and to wear a dust mask, eye protection and a protective overall. Asbestos for disposal is recommended to be bagged up in double polythene liners which are then sealed. It should be disposed of to an authorised waste disposal site licensed to handle asbestos and not form part of any domestic waste. Details of such sites may be obtained from the local regional office of the Environment Agency.

Integration of Special Needs Scouts/Others

The policy of the Scout Association is to integrate these people into the movement and grants are available to part fund the cost of adapting or providing suitable facilities e.g. access ramps.

Food Safety Act 1990

This could be a matter of concern especially if food is prepared on Scout premises and sold. It does not apply to food prepared at home then brought to the Scout premises for sale. Strictly speaking food prepared on barbecues and the like at Scout premises and sold would fall under the stringent requirements of the Food Safety Act and associated Food Hygiene legislation but the enforcement authorities currently seem to be taking a relaxed view in this respect as long as it is not a regular occurrence.

Basically food and drink matters should be dealt with as one would at home, wash your hands before handling it, store food correctly, cook it thoroughly etc. etc.

Alcohol

An alcohol policy must be determined and implemented. It may be forbidden to sell it by the terms of the title deeds. If alcohol, even home-made beers and wines is to be sold on Scout premises it is an offence not to obtain a licence.

Fire Certificate

These are only required by premises which are like hostels or hotels where paying guests sleep overnight. In this case the premises needs to be registered with the local Environmental Health Office of the borough or council and the onus is on the occupier of the premises to notify them.

If one or more people are employed there i.e. use the premises as a workplace and are paid by the Scout organisation it is recommended that the Environmental Health Office is again contacted as to whether the premises needs to be registered.

It may be that the premises have already been inspected by the environmental health office/fire authority and been issued with a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. This should be no problem with buildings that have been built with full Planning and Building consent.

The fire authority may say that the building has a low fire risk e.g. no flammables were stored there and therefore does not require a fire certificate but in all cases with or without a fire certificate a Risk Assessment approach is still required to identify the hazards arising from fire and the precautions required. In cases of doubt or for advice it is recommended that your local authority or local fire brigade headquarters is approached.

For premises with a fire certificate any structural alterations or changes in use must be notified in advance to the fire authority since it may affect the requirements of the fire certificate. A copy of the fire certificate must be kept on the premises.

Employers' Liability Insurance

If the Scout premises employs anyone they are required to insure against bodily injury or disease sustained by their employees. It is an offence not to display the certificate of insurance at the premises.

Use of facilities by children's playgroup

If the headquarters is to be used by children under eight years of age the playgroup will be responsible for the registration but the premises will have to be checked by the local authority social services department before the initial registration and on a least a yearly basis afterwards.

Public Liability Insurance

This covers liability to third parties in respect of injury, illness, accidental loss or damage to property. The Scout Association publishes a legal liability policy.

Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984

The occupier of premises owes a 'common duty of care' to their visitors which includes trespassers. A 'common duty of care' means to take such care as is reasonable in the circumstance a bit like a risk assessment and the Act gives some guidance as to what is reasonable.

As an example the occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults so a bush with poisonous berries like yew may have to be fenced off, the berries removed or remove the bush completely.

In order to minimise the risk of claims for personal injuries any anti-trespasser measures must be obvious and not be concealed. So if barbed wire on a fence was selected as a deterrent it must be visible to potential intruder. Any local planning restrictions on the height of the fence should be followed.

Public Entertainment & Gaming Licences

These arrangements have been streamlined recently for community premises catering for a maximum of 300 persons and it is recommended that the advice of your local authority is sought if the premises are to be

used for public entertainment, theatre or cinema performances.

There are various provisions relating to fundraising activities such as bingo and horserace nights and this is a complex area and again it is recommended that your local authority is approached for advice initially.

Copyright Law

Under copyright law it is generally an infringement of any copyright in literary, dramatic, and musical works, sound recordings, films (including videos) and broadcasts to perform, show or play the copyright work in public without the authorisation of the copyright owner. Most owners will authorise public performance in exchange for a royalty payment.

Injuries & Incidents

All injuries and incidents must be recorded and the Scout Association's Insurance Department at Lancing informed of the details as soon as possible.

An investigation must be held as soon as possible to identify the underlying cause of the accident followed by updating of the risk assessment if necessary with a note of why the revision was required.

In any accident investigation process the pertinent question to ask is 'what could have happened'. Do not assume that the outcome would be exactly the same the next time.

First Aid

An adequate first aid box, together with an accident/incident book is recommended to be kept on the premises and a trained first aider available when the premises are in use.

Reporting of defects

Anybody be it a volunteer, member of the public or paid employee has a duty to tell the person in charge of any defect or something that is unsafe so that appropriate action can be taken.

Emergency Checklist

It is suggested that a written checklist list of what to do in a emergency if a burst water pipe occurs is prepared and is readily available to deal with this and similar emergencies. A kind of risk assessment in its own right.

Bouncing Castles

If you hold an event involving these make sure they are securely tethered and cannot blow away, the activity is supervised, people of a similar age only use it at one time, shoes, spectacles, jewellery, necklaces are removed, advise users not to eat, drink or chew gum when bouncing. See Appendix 1.

Second hand Equipment

Beware of this. The two incidents below indicate what can go wrong:

a) Petrol pressure lantern

A Scout group acquired a petrol driven pressure lantern, as opposed to one using

paraffin or gas as the fuel, from items supplied for a jumble sale. Later, this was used at camp but because it had not been properly maintained incomplete combustion was occurring and poisonous carbon monoxide gas was being released. The first realisation that the lamp was faulty was when an unconscious Scout was found inside a tent.

b) Second hand furniture

A Scout group held a jumble sale and retained a donated sofa for their own use. Later on whilst somebody was 'bouncing' on it a metal spring broke, came through the fabric and caused a puncture injury.

Pushbar Fire Exit doors

There have been cases reported of access being gained by this route. The method involves striking the closed door on the outside which causes the pushbar to drop thus releasing the door. To minimise the risk of this happening an elastic 'bungee' rope or similar is attached to the bar and attached so that it holds the bar in the 'up' position.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Sources of further information

1. Food Safety booklet, The Scout Association obtainable from Insurance Department, Lancing. Tel 01903-755352
2. Licensing Your Community Building - A Short Guide published by Home Office Communication Directorate 1995. Obtainable from Home Office, A Division, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. Tel: 0171-273-3000
3. The Liquefied Petroleum Gas Industry Technical Association, Pavillion 16, Headlands Business Park, Salisbury Road, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 3PB. Tel: 01425 461612
4. Policy & Resources: Special Needs, Programme & Training Dept., The Scout Association, Gilwell Park, Chingford, London E4 7QW. Tel: 0181-524-5246
5. Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA), Friars House, 6 Parkway, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0NF. Tel: 01245 259744
6. Environment Agency (Head Office), Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS12 4UD. Tel: 01454-624400 General Enquiries: 0645-333111.
7. Health & Safety Executive (HMSO Books) Guidance Note PM76 for Bouncy Castles (free) from HSE Books Tel: 01787-881165. **Note** (July 1999) to be shortly replaced by HSE Information Sheet on 'Inflatables'. This will cost £2.50.
8. HSE Infoline (free) 0541-545500.
9. Managing your Community Building ISBN 0 900787 15 5 published by Community Matters, 8/9 Upper Street, London N1 0PQ. Tel: 0171-2260189

