

## **Volunteers Information and Safety Awareness**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project.  
This leaflet has been written to help you carry out practical countryside management tasks as safely as possible. By following these guidelines, you will not only reduce the risk of accidents, but you will also make better and more efficient use of the tools and so increase your own enjoyment of the work.

### **Essentials**

- You should
- ◆ always wear old clothing and strong boots, preferably with steel toe caps and carry waterproofs in case it rains;
  - ◆ not wear overly loose clothing;
  - ◆ ensure that you have had a tetanus injection within the last ten years;
  - ◆ know why the work is being carried out, and how to carry it out, don't be afraid to ask;
  - ◆ have the correct tools, sharp and in good order;
  - ◆ keep children and dogs under control, and well away from people working with tools;
  - ◆ bring a packed lunch
  - ◆ not carry valuables.
- We provide
- ◆ transport from office in Horton Country Park and Epsom Railway Station by arrangement;
  - ◆ tea, coffee and biscuits, and squash in summer;
  - ◆ accident insurance;
  - ◆ safety equipment.

## **General Health and Safety**

### **Introduction**

The Project Leader will describe the day's task on arrival at the site, together with safety information and precautions. He/she will give detailed instructions to any volunteer who needs them - **please ask** if you are unsure of **any** aspect of the work, or the tools to be used.

### **Safety Clothing**

Wear steel capped boots or similar stout shoes. Safety helmets, ear protectors, safety goggles and gloves are always available and may be worn at any time.

Safety helmets must be worn in any area where material over head height is being felled, when working with a tool above head height (eg drivall, mell), or when any construction work is being undertaken. It is also advisable to wear a safety helmet when using a long handled tool, or when they are being used near to you. Ear defenders must be worn if a chainsaw or other machinery is being used within 5 metres and at all times when power tools are being used in the workshop. Safety goggles and dust masks should be worn when creating sawdust or in excessively dusty conditions. Gloves may be worn except when using 'swinging' tools (eg hammer, clearing axe). Protective clothing requirements for electrical tools are marked on the tool or the box.

### **First Aid, Illness and Fatigue**

A first aid kit is carried in every vehicle and a kit is always carried to the work area. The Project Leader is normally the first aider and any injury or near miss **must** always be reported to them. Always wash cuts and grazes and have any injuries, however 'small', seen by the first aider. Record **ALL** injuries, regardless of severity, in the accident book which is kept in the first aid kit.

### **EMERGENCY ACTION**

**In the event of any emergency ENSURE that the Project Leader is informed immediately. Stop all work. Make sure that someone calls an ambulance.**

If you have an illness or you are under any medication which could affect your work such as diabetes, asthma or epilepsy, please inform the Project Leader, it will be treated in complete confidence. Some of the work carried out can be tiring. Work at your own pace and stop as often as necessary - do not work when overtired - this can lead to accidents. Do not work in extremely hot, cold or wet conditions. Drink plenty of fluid. Ensure that your tetanus injections are up to date. If working in or near to a pond or ditch, always wash your hands with the clean water provided before eating or drinking, and keep any cuts covered with a waterproof plaster. This is to avoid the risk of catching Weil's disease. Try to wear long trousers and long sleeves if working in long vegetation. This is to avoid bites from ticks, which carry Lyme disease.

Ask the Project Leader or see the task programme for further information on these diseases.

## Mobile Phones

The mobile phone is brought out on tasks and is for use in an emergency only. The task leader will normally have it on their person.

## COSHH and Risk Assessments

These have been compiled for every product or tool that we use/product or activity we carry out that is considered to be potentially damaging to health. They are available on site and must be read by everyone. Ask the task leader for further information.

## Safe Lifting

Never lift more than you can easily manage. Always ask for assistance for lifting heavier loads. Lift in easy stages - from floor to knee, then from knee to carrying position. Reverse this when setting a load down. Do not jerk, shove or twist. Awkward movements to the body can cause injury. Hold weights close to the body. Let the legs and the knees do the work - keep the back straight. Grip the load with the palms of the hands, not the fingertips, and do not change your grip while carrying the load. Check that your route is clear before starting and do not allow the load to obstruct your view. Use a wheelbarrow when available. Try to organise the work to minimise the amount of lifting necessary. When help is needed to lift heavy or awkward loads - get everyone to work together, with one person giving clear, unhurried instructions.

## Moving About

Do not move into an area where trees are being felled. Please walk about, do not run, particularly when carrying tools. Never hitch a ride on a vehicle not designed for passengers. Do not stand on a trailer or sit in a dumper truck.

## Vehicles

Passengers in any of our Project vehicles **must, at all times**, wear seat belts when they are fitted.

## Hazards to the Public

- ◆ Be aware of passers by and warn them of any dangers, using warning signs/notices/tape or by giving warnings verbally, particularly if using machinery or if felling trees. Report anything that seems dangerous, damaged or faulty to the Project Leader.

## Smoking

- ◆ Do not throw cigarette ends away. Always extinguish all stubs.
- ◆ Do not smoke near flammable substances, or when plant or vehicles are being refuelled.
- ◆ Obey any 'no smoking' rules, **especially in the workshop**.

## Fires

- ◆ Only light fires with the agreement of the Project Leader. Always make sure that you have a shovel and a fire fork nearby, **before** you light the fire.
- ◆ Never light a fire in a high wind.
- ◆ Site the fire correctly, away from trees, buildings, vehicles, roads etc and under no circumstances should you light a fire under or over power lines or gas pipes. Use judgement as to the height of the fire, as overhanging trees can be damaged.
- ◆ Take extra care on heathland as fire can travel underground and spread out of control. If this is a risk dig a trench around the area before starting a fire.
- ◆ Never use petrol, oil or tyres to start a fire.
- ◆ Keep tools away from a fire, especially **chainsaws, brush cutters and fuel**.
- ◆ Beware of wearing flammable clothing.
- ◆ If the fire is out of control, do not take risks, contact the emergency services.
- ◆ Always turn in the remains (or ashes) of a fire after allowing it to die down as much as possible. Fence off the area with tiger tape.

## Fencing

- ◆ When digging holes, check for electrical cables etc. - cable and pipe detection equipment is available.
- ◆ Try to fill all holes by the end of the day or fill with posts/wood etc.
- ◆ Do not cover holes with a tarpaulin.
- ◆ Always wear a helmet when using a drivall, or a mell. Drivalls are two person tools and are heavy, do not strain yourself.
- ◆ Take care when straining wire. Keep people away from wire being strained in case of snapping. Never leave strained wire unsecured.

## Timber

- ◆ When working with timber that has been treated with preservative always wear gloves and never allow the timber or off-cuts to be burnt.
- ◆ Always wash your hands after handling the timber and before eating or drinking.

(It is advisable to consult the COSHH data sheets when using treated timber)

### Ponds

- ◆ Only enter water if told to do so and never work alone.
- ◆ Have a rope handy, in case someone gets stuck, falls in or needs help.
- ◆ Waders are only to be used when authorised by the Project Leader.
- ◆ Only trained personnel may operate excavators, with the permission of the Project Leader (see also notes on power tools and machinery use).

### Tree Felling

- ◆ **Always wear a safety helmet when you or anyone else is felling, or when in a felling area.**
- ◆ Use recognised tree felling techniques and only fell trees after receiving instruction.
- ◆ Check for dead limbs or hung up branches which could be dangerous.
- ◆ Observe safe working distances, be aware of those felling near you and always look and warn anyone near **before** making the back cut.
- ◆ **Never leave a tree partially felled or hung up. Tape it off, or leave someone on guard, if you need to go for help.**
- ◆ Never fell trees in high winds.
- ◆ Use a rope or a winch if a tree may be difficult to fell.
- ◆ Place tree felling signs, warning tape or look-outs to warn people if felling in a public area, across or near footpaths or bridleways.
- ◆ Always clear away felled timber as you go.

### Safety with tools

#### Carrying

- ◆ Never carry more tools than you can comfortably manage.
- ◆ Always carry tools at your side, with the business end facing forward and points or blades facing towards the ground.
- ◆ Always keep a good distance between yourself and others when carrying tools, in case you slip.
- ◆ Never carry tools over your shoulder - heads are easily damaged.
- ◆ When not in use all tools should be laid flat on the ground, in an immediately obvious place.
- ◆ Spades, shovels, forks and rakes should be placed with points downwards.
- ◆ Do not leave saws hanging on branches, or clearing axes stuck in stumps.
- ◆ Always bring tools back into a central position near the tea box at lunch and tea breaks, and when you have finished with them. Also, please help to carry them back to the vehicle at the end of the day.

#### Using hand tools

- ◆ Check before you use any tool that the handle is not chipped, split, or broken. Ensure that they are sharp (but not by running your finger along the edge) since sharper tools are safe because they do not bounce and they work more effectively.
- ◆ Always use tools correctly, and use the correct tool for the job.
- ◆ Use a mell on wood only, never on metal or concrete.
- ◆ Never wear a glove when swinging any tool - your bare hand gives better grip, (tools that you swing include hammers, billhooks, slashers and clearing axes) and do not use these tools in heavy rain.
- ◆ Be careful not to strain your back when levering with an iron bar.
- ◆ **Always ask the Project Leader for instruction on how to use, or how to sharpen any tool.**

#### Maintenance

A well maintained tool is safer, lasts longer, and is easier to use.

- ◆ Make sure that tools are clean and rust free, that blades are sharp and that heads are secure.
- ◆ Inform the Project Leader if a tool is damaged and ensure that no one else uses it.

#### Safe Working Practices

When using 'swinging tools' such as slashers, billhooks, axes, mells, etc, it is important to work at a safe distance from anyone else. This should be a **minimum** of twice the length of your arm plus tool. Never work in an area where a tree is being felled. You should be a **minimum** distance of 5m or twice the height of the produce being felled, whichever is the greater. Also do not work too close to a fire (except when loading). You **must** keep both feet on the ground at all times when on site.

#### Power Tools and Machinery Use

For health and safety and insurance reasons, all machinery use is restricted to those people who have received the relevant training for the tool in question. Names of qualified people can be found in the training register. Machinery can be used on site or at the workshops, but only with the permission of the Project Leader.

## 1 Electric Tools

Only those who have completed the 'Power Tools Training Course' may use power tools. See also the notes that accompany the 'Power Tools Training Course' for detailed information on use of power tools.

- ◆ Appropriate clothing must be worn: steel toe cap boots should always be worn in addition to the specific personal protective equipment for the tool being used; no loose or baggy clothing tie long hair back.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of the person using a power tool to ensure that everyone else in the workshop is wearing ear defenders.
- ◆ Make sure you know how to stop a machine, check that all guards are fitted correctly, and that it is in a safe condition to use **before** starting.
- ◆ Keep the area round the machine free from all obstructions.
- ◆ Never work in a gangway - particularly near or in front of the fire exit.
- ◆ Always use the dust extractor equipment with the appropriate tools.
- ◆ Ensure that the work piece being drilled, sanded, planed or routed is secure (preferably clamped) before starting work.
- ◆ Never attempt to clean or change bits or belts on the machine while it is in motion, always turn off and remove the plug (keep it in your hand or pocket). Unplug all power tools as soon as you stop using them.
- ◆ If using an extension lead, ensure that it is **fully uncoiled** before use. Make sure that the lead is laid out safely to prevent trip hazards.
- ◆ Never, ever, work along with power tools.
- ◆ Express permission from Project staff is needed to use power tools.
- ◆ Never distract people who are using machines.
- ◆ **Only Project staff** may use the angle grinder and circular saw.
- ◆ If an accident occurs and someone is suffering from an electric shock, switch off the mains using a wooden stick and move the tool away from the casualty. **CALL AN AMBULANCE.**

## 2 Winching

We have two types of winch available, the Tirfor (hand operated) and one mounted on the front of the Land Rover. Vehicle drivers only are allowed to operate the latter. See also leaflet for 'Winch Training Course'.

- ◆ Always wear a hard hat, leather gloves and steel toe caps when winching.
- ◆ Always mark out an area with tape into which no one should walk.
- ◆ Never step over or stand directly in line with a tensioned cable.

## 3 Chainsaws and Scrub Cutters

- ◆ **Volunteers can use chainsaws if certificated and have express permission from the Project Manager and task leader.**
- ◆ If using a scrub cutter you **must** wear a chainsaw hat, visor, ear defenders and chainsaw leggings.
- ◆ Never walk into an area that has been marked out for chainsaw use.
- ◆ Never walk closer to a person using a chainsaw or scrub cutter than 15m or twice the length of the produce being cut, whichever is the greater.
- ◆ Never tap a chainsaw/scrub cutter operator on the shoulder to attract their attention - do this from a safe distance by shouting or waving.
- ◆ Never leave fuel cans anywhere near a fire.

## 4 Hired Plant

- ◆ All users of hired plant should refer to The Lower Mole Project machinery policy before use - ask a member of Project staff if you want to see a copy.
- ◆ Hired plant may only be used with a certificated member of staff on site.
- ◆ Operators of hired plant **must** always wear steel toe caps and also ear defenders and a hard hat where appropriate.
- ◆ Always leave the implements on an excavator grounded when leaving the vehicle.
- ◆ Never walk within the maximum reach of a 360° excavator or stand within the steering arc of an articulated dumper when the engine is running.
- ◆ Do not ride in the bucket of a dumper truck.

For further information telephone us on 01372 743783 or write to The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project, 2 West Park Farmhouse, Horton Country Park, Horton Lane, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 8PL. The Lower Mole Project is affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. The Lower Mole Project is sponsored by Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the Corporation of London.