

# Risk Assessment For Scout Premises



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## Background

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 headquarters building with a meeting hall, storage, kitchen, toilet facilities;
- b) stores liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders;
- c) some associated land;
- d) as well as 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.

### **What is Risk Assessment?**

Risk assessment can perhaps best be described as disciplined common sense applied to every day life. Whether descending a twisting staircase, crossing the road, or frying an egg, we all “do” risk assessment or, safety checks in one way or another every day. However, a structured approach makes the task easier and helps us to spot all the potential risks. There are just five steps to a proper risk assessment . . .

**One - Look for the hazards (how can people be hurt or damage caused):** stand back from the situation, and assess it. Identify all the hazards, and list them, concentrating on the significant ones e.g. a slippery floor, a heater, or very hot water.

**Two – Decide who might be harmed, and how:** think particularly about regular users who might have become accustomed to the presence of the hazard; about visitors who might not know that the hazard is present; and about young people, especially those with special needs, who simply might not appreciate the hazard.

**Three – Evaluate the risks (what controls exist already?):** consider the likelihood of the hazards causing harm to someone. If the heater is already guarded by a securely fixed grill, the risk is clearly low, and no additional precautions may be necessary. If the floor is always slippery, perhaps it needs ‘roughing up’ as a precaution – and certainly it is no place for physically active games! Your responsibility is to do whatever is reasonably practicable to make the situation safe and your aim is to minimise all the risks by maintaining or adding to the precautions as necessary.

**Four – Record your findings (what additional controls are needed?):** you will always need to tell those involved in the situation what action they should take – and what actions they must not take! Where the situation is one in which Scouting regularly takes place (‘the Scout hut’, a District camp-site), your record should be a permanent one, such as an instruction sheet or card for users, who should be required to read it

before leading a Scouting activity in the particular situation. Regular users should be required to re-read it from time to time.

**Five – Review and revise:** you cannot assume that the hazards, and the risks, will stay the same for all time. So you must review your risk assessment from time to time, and revise it where necessary. This will almost certainly mean a revised record e.g. a new instruction sheet. It is good practice to fix a maximum time between reviews (e.g. not less than once every year for a Scout meeting place), even if you do not think that a review is actually needed. Of course, it may be necessary to review your assessment in the light of changes to the situation much more frequently than you had originally thought. An out-of-date assessment is a hazard in its own right, because it may misleadingly encourage people to think that all the necessary precautions are in place.

### **Where do I start?**

The examples in the table that follows are not exhaustive but suggest some of the 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.

Please see Appendix 1 at the end of this factsheet for an example of a risk assessment.

### **Other Items**

#### **Special Needs**

There is additional help at ScoutBase by following the link <http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/sneeds/> and additionally factsheet *FS270002 Disabled Access to Buildings*.

## **Asbestos**

There is a requirement in law to identify and record whether a premises contains asbestos and to manage any risk from this material.

Refer to Factsheet *FS320002 – Managing Asbestos*

## **Food Safety**

Refer to Factsheet *FS320003 Food Safety* and additionally *FS320004 Camp Food Safety*.

## **Alcohol**

Refer to Factsheet *FS185092 Alcohol and Scouting*.

## **Fire Safety**

There is a requirement in law to risk assess all non-domestic premises for fire safety. This can be included within the main premises risk assessment. Further guidance is found in factsheet *FS320007 Managing Fire Safety*.

## **Employers' Liability Insurance**

If the Group/District/County 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.

## **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.

## **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 at least a yearly basis afterwards.

## **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 minimize 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.

## **Injuries & Incidents**

All injuries and incidents must be recorded in accordance with POR Chapter 7 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 must 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).

## 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 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 the Group knew 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 use at their HQ. Later, whilst somebody was 'bouncing' on it, a metal spring broke, came through the fabric and caused a puncture injury.

## Sources of further information

- The Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association, Pavilion 16, Headlands Business Park, Salisbury Road, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 3PB.

Tel: 01425 461612. [mail@lpga.co.uk](mailto:mail@lpga.co.uk)

[www.lpga.co.uk](http://www.lpga.co.uk)

- Environment Agency (Head Office), Rio House, Waterside Drive, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol, BS12 4UD.

General Enquiries: 08708 506506.

[enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

- HSE Infoline - 0845 345 0055.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

- Managing your Community Building: ISBN 0 900787 75 9, published by Community Matters, 12-20 Baron Street, London, N1 9LL

020 7837 7887 / 0845 8474 253

[info@communitymatters.org.uk](mailto:info@communitymatters.org.uk)

[www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)

## Example of a simple Risk Assessment for a Scout Premises

Adapted from: *Five Steps to Risk Assessment*

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3 and STEP 4

STEP 5

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed? / Risk	Is The Risk Adequately controlled? / Are Further Controls Needed?	Review and Revise
<b>Building Construction</b>			
Fragile Roof	Falling through. Debris	No ready means of access. Put up warning signs e.g. <i>Danger Fragile Roof – Use Crawling Boards</i>	
Windows	Broken glass. Forced entry	Consider using wire mesh or toughened glass to lessen risk of breakage by vandalism. Locks. Control activities (use of heavy balls etc).	
Internal Window Sills	Beavers / Cubs – run into protruding at head height	Reduce them flush to the wall or pad them to lessen injury.	
Blocked drainpipes & gutters	Slippery ground, worse if frozen	Regular inspection and cleaning out.	
<b>Services</b>			
Gas Supply	Explosion, Fire, asphyxiation.	Use HSE approved gas fitter (CORGI registered) for work on fittings and appliances.  Good preventative maintenance.  Turn off isolation valve when vacating premises.	
Water	Leaks, Burst Pipes	Lag pipes, check regularly, drain system in winter if necessary or turn off when vacating.	
Sewer and Waste Water	Leaks, Blockage, Disease	Regular Inspection	

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Central Heating Boiler / Hot Water System	Release of gases to building. Loss of use. Hot radiators / heaters	Regular maintenance by a competent person. Install carbon monoxide alarm. Use appropriate guards on heaters.	
Electricity - Overloaded Sockets Trailing / Damaged Leads	Electrocution Fire Tripping	Check equipment leads & plugs regularly. Remove anything substandard. Use a competent person for repairs and major inspections. Isolate supply as necessary.	
<b>Entrances &amp; Exits</b>			
Obstructions. Poor Lighting Uneven Surfaces	Trips and falls Unable to operate doors in emergency	Ensure Fire Doors are unlocked and clear at all time. Check outside too. Install good lighting (plus emergency lighting) on exit routes. Practise fire drill at least once each term with all users (sections).	
<b>Storage</b>			
Combustible Materials. Rubbish	Fire Disease / Vermin	Careful storage in containers. Remove other potential ignition sources. Remove all rubbish, store food in proper containers or remove altogether where possible.	
Camping Equipment	Rot, Mildew Lifting Heavy Kit Storing at Height	Ensure kit is put away dry and store is kept dry and aired. Break down into manageable amounts. Work together. DON'T expect Cubs/Scouts to lift things that are too heavy (however willing). Put heavy things low down / Light things up high. Check ladders and steps are safe and work in pairs.	

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed? / Risk	Is The Risk Adequately controlled? / Are Further Controls Needed?	Review and Revise
Gas Cylinders and Appliances	Leaks, fire / explosion  Hoses in poor condition	Store cylinders securely outside, on area free of combustible material but not below ground level, away from drains & keep upright.  Train users. Check before use.  Ensure good ventilation when changing cylinders.	
<b>Kitchen</b>			
Sharp objects	Cuts	Reduce use of breakable glass and control access to sharp knives.  Dispose of broken glass carefully (wrapped to protect sharp edges)	
Food and Drink	Food poisoning  Vermin  Slipping on spills	Good training is a must. Refer to factsheet on <i>Food Safety FS320003</i> .  Label drinking water.  Avoid leaving food in premises where possible.  Clean up spills promptly. Ensure appropriate cleaning equipment is available	
Hot Surfaces	Burns and Scalds	Use signage. Train users. Avoid deep fat fryers.	
<b>Toilets / Washrooms</b>			
Bacteria  Legionella	Disease	Regular inspection and cleaning of facilities. Good supply of toilet paper, soap, towels / hand drying facilities.  Check and run hot water systems. De-scale and disinfect showerheads. Periodic check by a competent person.  Use 'heat at source' system to avoid storing hot water.	
Cleaning Materials	Fumes, Chemical burns	Must do a COSHH* risk assessment, which applies to all chemicals on the premises. Train users. Read labels carefully.  Have secure storage for all chemicals.	
		* COSHH – Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations	

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed? / Risk	Is The Risk Adequately controlled? / Are Further Controls Needed?	Review and Revise
<b>Surrounding Land</b>			
Grass, Rubbish, Uneven Ground	Risk of fire, trips and cuts	Cut grass regularly. Clear rubbish. Walk and assess the area before running an activity	
<b>Vandalism / Theft</b>			
Access	Damage, Loss of facilities	Contact local Police Crime prevention Officer for advice. Security lighting secure fencing, regular checks.	
<b>General Reminder</b>			
		Set a REVIEW Date...make it at least annually!	