

## Health and Safety Guide

### Introduction

This guide is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all volunteers engaged in outdoor fieldwork activities as part of the River Rangers. This includes surveying for invasive species, surveying for pollution, conducting riverfly monitoring and carrying out invasive species removal. By following these guidelines, volunteers can minimize risks and contribute to a safe and productive work environment.

### 1. General Safety Guidelines

#### 1.1. Pre-Fieldwork Preparation

**Health Considerations:** Ensure you are physically fit for the tasks involved. Inform the team leader of any medical conditions or allergies. Take regular breaks to avoid fatigue.

**Clothing:** Wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions, including waterproofs, hats, and gloves. Always wear long sleeves and trousers for outdoor work to protect against insects and stings.

**Footwear:** Use sturdy, non-slip boots with good ankle support. For instance, hiking boots or sturdy trainers that you do not mind getting dirty.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Wear any necessary PPE given to you, such as high-visibility vests, gloves, waders, buoyancy aids, and eye protection.

**Hydration and Nutrition:** Carry sufficient water and snacks.

#### 1.2. Weather Awareness

**Check Forecasts:** Before heading out, check the weather forecast. You must reschedule if severe weather is expected, such as if a weather warning is issued by the Met Office. Events and fieldwork must be rescheduled in cases where temperatures are below 5 degrees or above 28 degrees. Ensure you take extra precautions in cold/hot weather.

**Sun Protection:** Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat to protect against sunburn and heatstroke.

**Cold Weather:** Wear insulated clothing and keep dry to prevent hypothermia. Be aware of frostbite risks.

### 2. Safety Near Rivers and Water Bodies

#### 2.1. General Water Safety

**Assess Risks:** Evaluate water conditions, including the flow rate, depth, and visibility before entering. Do not enter an unknown stretch of water.

**Buddy System:** Never work alone near water. Always have a partner and maintain visual contact.

Non-Swimmers: Non-swimmers should not enter the water and should stay clear of the water's edge.

## 2.2. Working in Rivers and Along Banks

Footing: Be cautious of slippery rocks, mud, and loose gravel. Move slowly and deliberately. When working in a river you must always check the footing of where you are going to move using a stick or pole.

Water Depth: Avoid areas where the water is too deep (above mid-thigh) or where the current is strong. You must stay in water below your mid thigh. You must check water depth before entering or moving in water using a stick or pole.

Buoyancy aids: Always wear a buoyancy aid when working in water above your knees or fast flowing water of any depth

Emergency Plan: Know the emergency procedures for water-related accidents, including who to contact and the location of the nearest hospital.

## 3. Working in Public Spaces and Outdoors

### 3.1. Public Interaction

Be Aware: Be mindful of the presence of the public, especially children and pets. Maintain a safe distance from them and your work area.

Communication: Carry identification and explain your purpose to the public if approached.

Dealing with antisocial behaviour: If an individual or group is behaving in an antisocial way, stop work and leave the area. If you feel threatened in any way, either direct the antisocial individual to the officer in charge of the event or if you are conducting a survey alone or in pairs, call the police.

### 3.2. Navigating Terrain

Obstacles: Watch for trip hazards like roots, rocks, and uneven ground. Clear paths as needed.

Boundaries: Stay within designated work areas. Do not trespass on private property.

Traffic Awareness: When working near roads, wear high-visibility clothing and remain alert to traffic.

## 4. Using Tools

### 4.1. Tool Safety

Tool Handling: Use tools only for their intended purpose.

Personal Space: Maintain a safe distance from others when using tools to avoid accidental injury.

Storage and Transport: Store tools safely when not in use. Carry them securely to avoid dropping or losing them. When on site ensure tools are placed out of the way but so that they are still visible to prevent creating a trip hazard.

## 5. Emergency Procedures

### 5.1. First Aid

First Aid Kit: At all events an officer will carry a first aid kit, ensure you know who has the first aid kit and that you must advertise the need for medical attention if the situation arises.

Basic First Aid: Know how to treat common injuries, such as cuts, sprains, and insect bites.

Medical Attention: Seek professional medical help for any injury that cannot be treated on-site or if symptoms worsen.

### 5.2. Emergency Contacts

Communication Devices: Carry a fully charged mobile phone at all times.

Emergency Numbers: Know the local emergency contact numbers, including the nearest hospital, and inform the team leader of any incidents.

## 6. Environmental Considerations

### 6.1. Respect for Wildlife

-Disturbance: Minimize disturbance to wildlife by staying on designated paths and keeping noise levels low.

Nest and Habitat Protection: Avoid disturbing nests or habitats. Be aware of protected species in the area. Do not tread over areas where ground nesting birds may be present. If you see fish spawning in a river, do not enter that area of the river.

### 6.2. Waste Management

Litter: Carry out all litter and dispose of it properly. Leave the site cleaner than you found it.

## 7. Post-Fieldwork Procedures

### 7.1. Decontamination

Cleaning Equipment: Clean and disinfect all tools and equipment you are responsible for to prevent the spread of invasive species or pathogens.

Personal Clean-Up: Wash hands and exposed skin thoroughly after handling invasive species or coming into contact with river water. Ensure you wash your clothing and shoes to prevent the spread of invasive species or pathogens.

## 7.2. Reporting

Incident Reporting: Report any injuries, accidents, or near-misses to the team leader as soon as possible.

## 8. Toxicity and disease

### 8.1. Water: Awareness of infection risk and precautions

Pollution: Check the Thames Water EDM map for sewage discharges prior to entering the water or working in an environment where you may encounter river water. If sewage discharge has been reported within the last 48 hours you must not enter the water, you must not touch the water and the work must be rescheduled.

Waterborne diseases: Working near/around/in rivers increases your risk of waterborne diseases and infection. Be aware that your risk of Hep A, Hep B, Weils disease and E.Coli (for instance) are increased by working near/around/in rivers. To reduce the risk of infection, you must wear gloves during contact with water, and avoid touching your face. You must use hand santiser and wash your hands after work done in and around water. If you feel ill following working near/around/In river water, you must go to the doctor and inform them that you have been working near/around/in river water and ask them for relevant tests. If you are concerned about Hep A/Hep B infection, speak to your doctor who can provide necessary information and vaccines where needed.

### 8.2. Sharps: Awareness of infection risk and precautions

Sharps: Sharp objects may be present on site, that can increase the risk of tetanus or spread HIV. You must not pick up sharp objects using your hands, only litter pickers. You must not pick up any needle found on site, and you must instead report this to the local council who are equipped to deal with this.

### 8.3. Wildlife: Awareness of infection risk and precautions

Infection from wildlife: Working in an outdoor environment increase your exposure to wildlife, which can carry harmful diseases such as lymes disease and bird flu. You must wear appropriate clothing to protect your skin, and not interact and keep a safe distance from any animals encountered. If you get ill following working outdoors inform your doctor that you have been working outdoors.