

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

PART 1 - GENERAL RISKS

This general risk section applies to all Society outdoor activities. Specific risks associated with excavations are covered in part 2, below. Additional supplementary risk assessments might be required for particular activities.

Hazard	Mitigating circumstances	Risk	Additional action required	Notes
Accident during travel to and from activities	Most activities are within a short distance of Edinburgh. Travel is mostly in well-maintained private cars or public transport.	Very small risk of fatality. Small risk of serious injury.	None.	Risk is no higher than members normally accept when travelling for their own purposes.
Cuts and abrasions.	Occasional reminders on Tetanus injections included in EAFS Newsletter.	Significant risk of Tetanus infection.	Remind members again that they should maintain up to date Tetanus injections.	<i>Action: Don Matthews / John Urquhart.</i>
Falls and trips.	EAFS activities rarely involve the need for working at any significant height but many involve working on rough ground so trips are more likely than falls. Most activities are close to roads and within mobile phone contact in the event of an emergency.	Small risk of broken bones.	Consider including First Aid kit with standard geophysics equipment.	<i>Action: Don Matthews</i>
			Consider establishing which EAFS members who regularly attend outside activities are qualified First Aiders or medically-trained.	<i>Action: Don Matthews</i> (Ensuring a qualified First Aider is present at every activity is probably not practicable.)
			Try to ensure that where activities are on more remote or difficult terrain, this is made clear in the Newsletter or in relevant email 'alerts'.	
Serious health problems, such as due to pre-existing medical conditions.	Most activities are close to roads and within mobile phone contact in the event of an emergency.	Small risk of fatality.	See notes on First Aiders and remote or difficult terrain, above.	In practice, it is very difficult to eliminate this risk.

Hazard	Mitigating circumstances	Risk	Additional action required	Notes
Unexpected bad weather	Most activities are close to cars for shelter. Activities such as geophysics tend to be cut short by the onset of bad weather. Very few activities are carried out during winter months.	Very small risk of hypothermia.	None.	
Electrical storms	Geophysics activity tends to be cut short by the onset of bad weather to protect the electrical equipment. Key geophysics personnel are aware of the risk.	Significant risk of electrocution if using ground resistance equipment during a thunder storm.	None.	Gaffney and Gater and also the TR/CIA user instructions give warnings about operating geophysics equipment during electrical storms.
Livestock and agricultural machinery.	EAFS activities are rarely carried out in proximity to livestock or farm or forestry machinery.	Very small risk of serious injury or fatality.	Wherever possible avoid undertaking activities where this risk exists and terminate the activity if the risk arises.	
Wildlife encounters	Most wildlife will quickly vacate any area in which we are working. The greatest risk comes from adders, which have been encountered during fieldwork. However, adders will normally seek to escape and their bite is rarely fatal to adults.	Small risk of illness and very small risk of fatality following an adder bite.	None at present.	
Tick-borne Lyme Disease (especially in bracken and other rough habitats)	Only some EAFS activities are carried out in this type of habitat.	Small but increasing risk of Lyme Disease.	Note on ticks and Lyme Disease included in the Newsletter. (Action complete.)	
Rat-borne Weil's Disease in contaminated still or flowing water.	Weil's Disease is rare in the UK and EAFS activities are very rarely carried out in rat-contaminated situations.	Extremely small risk of Weil's Disease.	None.	

Hazard	Mitigating circumstances	Risk	Additional action required	Notes
Presence of children or young people.	Children or young people are rarely present without their parents.	Risks due to other factors are increased significantly. Risk of breaching Duty of Care expectations.	Under-18s must either be accompanied by a parent or by a responsible adult nominated to be <i>in loco parentis</i> . The organiser of the activity must be informed of any such arrangements.	If EAFS nominates the responsible adult, written parental consent must be obtained together with information on any medical conditions. All legal child protection requirements would have to be met.
Working alone in remote area.	EAFS activities rarely involve members working alone in remote areas.	Risks due to other factors are increased significantly by fact that person is on their own.	Members in these circumstances should make their plans known to someone else who can raise the alarm in the event of a non-return.	Consider covering this issue and others identified above in a health and safety guidance leaflet for distribution to members. <i>Action: Don Matthews</i>

PART 2 - SPECIFIC RISKS DURING EXCAVATIONS

Hazard	Mitigating circumstances	Risk	Additional action required	Notes
Injuries from hand-tools, especially from 'high energy' activity such as mattocking.	Some (though not all) excavations involve mainly 'low energy' activity such as trowelling.	Significant risk of minor injuries and smaller risk of serious injuries, particularly to hands, feet, eyes and head.	Consider including advice on appropriate PPE in a health and safety guidance leaflet for distribution to members.	<i>Action: Don Matthews</i>
Injuries from mechanical excavators and other vehicles.	EAFS excavations do not normally involve mechanical excavators	Very small risk of death or serious injury for people working in trench or in nearby trenches.	See note on PPE, above. Rigorous control of situation by excavation supervisor if this circumstance were ever to arise at an EAFS excavation.	This might be more of a risk for individual EAFS members working on non-EAFS excavations.
Injuries from lifting or manoeuvring heavy weights such as barrows and buckets full of soil.	Members on barrow or bucket duty quickly become aware of the weight of soil and get diggers to fill them less full.	Significant risk of potentially serious strain injuries, especially to back, when barrowing or lifting heavy objects.	Consider including simple advice on lifting heavy weights in a health and safety guidance leaflet for distribution to members.	<i>Action: Don Matthews</i>

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		Significant risk of potentially serious slip-related injuries when manoeuvring heavy loads in wet or muddy conditions.	Continual review by excavation supervisor as work proceeds.	
Falls of persons into trenches.		Significant risk of minor injuries. Smaller risk of serious injury.	Edges of trenches should be adequately marked. Deep trenches should be adequately fenced. It should be checked that available EAFS equipment includes an adequate stock of fencing material before any future multi-day excavation is undertaken.	This risk can involve members of the general public as well as EAFS members and is probably the risk that is most likely to generate a claim against the Society's public liability insurance.
Collapse of trench wall due to excessive trench depth.	EAFS practice has been to step trenches at 1 metre depth.	Small risk of death or serious injury for people working in trench.	Continual review by excavation supervisor as excavation proceeds.	Trench collapse is a well known risk and it is anticipated that in practice any EAFS excavation supervisor would adequately control this risk.
Collapse of trench wall due to excessive loading of adjacent ground or undercutting of sides.	Spoil heaps and heavy weights would not normally be placed immediately adjacent to trenches. Any significant degree of undercutting would be contrary to normal practice.	Small risk of injury for people working in trench.		
Collapse of trench wall due to mechanical excavators or other vehicles near trench.	EAFS excavations do not normally involve mechanical excavators or similar vehicles. Members' cars would not be adjacent to trenches.	Very small risk of death or serious injury for people working in trench.	Rigorous control of situation by excavation supervisor if mechanical excavators or other vehicles were ever used at an EAFS excavation.	This might be more of a risk for individual EAFS members working on non-EAFS excavations.

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Collapse of inadequately supported structures (a) near a trench.	A trench would not normally be placed close to an above-ground structure in danger of collapse. Care would normally be taken to avoid the potential for weakening the ground support for nearby structures such as walls.	Very small risk of death or serious injury for people working in trench.	Control by excavation supervisor to avoid this risk.	This is an obvious risk and it is anticipated that in practice any EAFS excavation supervisor would adequately control it.
Collapse of inadequately supported structures (b) within a trench.	EAFS excavations do not normally reveal in-situ structures such as woodwork or ironwork that would need supporting to prevent them becoming a hazard to people in the trench.	Very small risk of death or serious injury for people working in trench.	Review and control of situation by excavation supervisor if this circumstance were ever to arise at an EAFS excavation.	It is unlikely that excavation would proceed further if this situation presented itself at an EAFS excavation. This might be more of a risk for individual EAFS members working on non-EAFS excavations.
Injury arising from the fall of a loose heavy object left near trench edge.		Small risk of minor injury and smaller risk of serious injury to person working near trench edge.	Control of situation by excavation supervisor.	
Inadequate ventilation of deep trench leading to potential for build-up of asphyxiating gases.	EAFS excavations do not normally include deep constricted trenches where inadequate air flow could be a problem.	Extremely small risk of death due to asphyxia.	None.	This situation is most likely to occur with excavation of a deep well, which EAFS would be unlikely to undertake.
Bee or wasp stings due to disturbance of nest.	Most (but not all) people are very wary of the presence of bees and (particularly) wasps and will take avoiding action.	Small risk of serious injury and very small risk of death arising from multiple stings. Main hazard probably arises from wasp nests.	Anti-wasp spray purchased for inclusion in excavation equipment to facilitate removal of any wasp nest to a safe distance. (Action complete.)	
		Very small risk of death arising from allergic reaction to bee or wasp sting.	None at present.	