



Guidelines for Hut Managers

No. 2

February 2015*



Health & Safety

Scope and context

Mountaineering and climbing clubs do not normally have any employees and are therefore not obliged to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It is, however, important that clubs recognise that they have a legal *duty of care* (under common law) towards members, guests and any other person while these people are in the club's hut or on any part of its property.

Owners and occupiers of huts should ensure that their premises are safe to use (Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984; Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960) otherwise they may be sued for damages for injuries suffered by members and others whilst on the premises. The Unfair Contracts Act 1977 restricts the use of exemption clauses to avoid liability for death or injury.

A way to minimize the chance of people being injured is for clubs to introduce an effective health and safety regime. This will also reduce the possibility of people who are injured successfully suing for damages. To get some idea of the requirements set out in the guidance documents refer to the checklist on page 4 of these guidelines.

It is not very realistic to try to implement a health & safety policy unless the hut is first improved to make it safe to use – see the specific guidelines cited in the section on risk assessment below and see also Hut Guideline no. 4 *Disability Discrimination*.

It is also important that the club should be fully aware of the civil liability insurance cover provided as a benefit of membership of BMC or MCofS, especially the exclusion clauses – see guideline no. 6 *Civil Liability Insurance*.

Health & safety policy statement

It is very important that clubs should prepare a H&S policy statement. This should deal with all aspects of the club activities not just the running of the club's hut(s). It must be formally adopted by the committee and approved at an AGM.

The policy statement should be brought to every member's attention by being published in handbooks, newsletters and being displayed on hut notice boards. New members should be issued with a copy on joining.

The committee should appoint an officer or a member to be responsible for implementing and monitoring the aims of the policy statement.

Although each club's circumstances will be different, typical subjects covered in the statement could be –

- The organisation of the club and its hut(s) with particular reference to those responsible for health and safety matters. It could also make reference to provisions made for first aid, accident reporting, chemical safety, fire safety, electrical safety, gas safety and young persons.
- The club's determination to provide a safe environment for members, guests, contractors and members of the public while they are on the club's property.
- To identify hazards and assess the risk in order to reduce or eliminate these hazards.

*See notes in the information box on page 4 re. the currency (version no.) of this guideline

Health & Safety

- To encourage people to take care on the hills and crags particularly when attending club meets.
- To adopt a participation statement similar to that issued by the BMC and the MCoFS:
The BMC and MCoFS recognise that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.
- To expect all club members to accept the principles of the health and safety policy statement and that they act in a safe and responsible manner when on club premises.

Risk assessments

Risk assessments should be carried out relating to the hut itself including access routes, car parking, cooking, steps, stairs, fires/heating, storage of flammable or toxic substances etc. See these specific Hut Guidelines: *Fire Safety* (no. 3.1 England & Wales and no. 3.2 Scotland) regarding fire precautions and escape routes; *Maintenance* (no. 5) re. gas and electricity installations; *Asbestos* (no. 7).

When work is being carried out on the hut by either members, guests or external contractors, risk assessments should be carried out relating to specific tasks. Contractors should also submit their own health and safety policy and carry out their own risk assessments.

The risk assessments should take into consideration the working environment, personal safety equipment and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH).

It must be stressed that if the appropriate expertise is not readily available then the club should seek expert help in the preparation of any document involving health and safety. If the expert chosen to carry out the assessment does not have knowledge of the club's activities or property, input from someone familiar with the situation will also be necessary.

Preparing a risk assessment involves the following steps –

- Identify the hazards.
- Identify who might be harmed, i.e. members, guests, visitors, contractors and trespassers.
- Assess the risks, i.e. the likelihood of an accident and its likely severity.
- Record the findings of the survey as they may be needed in the event of an accident.
- Consider what action, if any, needs to be taken to eradicate or reduce the danger and therefore the risk of injury to someone on the premises.
- Take action to remedy the hazardous situation.
- Undertake periodic risk assessment surveys where appropriate.

Examples of working hazards could include handling loads, using electrical equipment or using harmful substances and materials. Use of plant or equipment such as a road roller or a chain saw should only be undertaken by trained personnel who are in possession of a current certificate from an appropriate national authority.

It should be noted that working on gas and electrical installations is now restricted by law to qualified registered contractors. Note also –

- Any work carried out on the club's premises should be controlled by a 'competent person'.
- Before members do jobs in or around the hut they should demonstrate their competence to do it safely.
- If the club provides ladders and tools for members to use they should be of good quality and in a good state of repair.

Health & Safety

The working environment

When working on maintenance or improvements to a club's hut, consideration should be given by those organising the work to the working environment that will be encountered.

Problems may occur in the following circumstances –

- Working near underground or overhead services – establish positions beforehand.
- Working alone – avoid at all costs.
- Working in confined spaces – could be a lack of oxygen and/or existence of poisonous or explosive gases – this may be in a roof space, underfloor, down a manhole or in other enclosed chambers.
- Working at height – especially where ladders or scaffolding is to be used.
- Working in excavations – adequate shoring of excavation sides will be necessary.
- Dust and smoke – could include dust from cement or sanding and toxic smoke.
- Heat and cold – allow for frequent checks on people working in abnormal conditions.
- Water – anything from slips on wet surfaces to drowning in open or fast flowing water.
- Existence of materials hazardous to health; where these substances occur specialist advice should be sought.

The HSE sets out procedures to be observed in identifying and dealing with substances that are hazardous to health. These may include –

- Asbestos – perhaps already existing in the building (see guideline no. 7)
- Dust – due to working with or handling various materials.
- Flammable liquids and gas containers, which should not be stored in the hut.
- Solvents and other chemicals that are often present in paints and many cleaning compounds.

Personal safety equipment

This is required in order to protect any part of the operator's body likely to be at risk from undertaking a specific task and should include equipment to protect lungs, head and neck, eyes, skin, ears, hands, arms, feet and legs. For instance, a chainsaw user should be wearing a helmet, ear defenders, eye protection, suitable close-fitting clothing, gloves with protective pads and chainsaw operator's leg protection. High visibility clothing may also be necessary.

Useful publications

- *Five steps to risk assessment*. HSE. Standardises the approach to producing a risk assessment. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf
- *Essentials of health & safety at work*. HSE. There are chapters on specific subjects including legal requirements. www.qub.ac.uk/safety-reps/sr_webpages/safety_downloads/essentials_of_h_and_s.pdf
- *Health & safety overview: A guide to good practice for conservation groups and land managers*. BTCV. Deals with safety matters involving volunteer labour. <http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level2/60/stock/962> and then click on the link "TCV Handbooks..."
- *Working with substances hazardous to health: What you need to know about COSHH*. HSE. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf
- *Homeworking: Guidance for employers and employees on health and safety*. HSE. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg226.pdf
- *Health and safety regulation.... a short guide*. HSE. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsc13.pdf

Health & safety checklist >>

Health & Safety

HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

1. General

- (a) Club committee to adopt a health and safety policy and disseminate to all members.
- (b) Club committee to appoint a competent person to be responsible for health and safety.
- (c) Club committee to keep the health and safety policy and issues under regular review.

2. Everyday use of the hut

- (a) Club committee to appoint a qualified or competent hut manager or warden to carry out a risk assessment to identify any risks to those using the hut.
- (b) Implement any simple improvements immediately.
- (c) Programme and finance any larger improvement works to be carried out at the earliest possible time.
- (d) Fire risk assessment should be done in conjunction with this section – refer to Hut Guidelines nos. 3.1 and 3.2 *Fire Safety*.
- (e) Hut manager or warden to keep health and safety issues under regular review.

3. Working at the hut

- (a) Contractors to provide their health and safety policy as well as their risk assessment(s).
- (b) Club to appoint a suitable competent hut manager or warden to be responsible for work at the hut.
- (c) Hut manager or warden to carry out a risk assessment for every item of work to be done by members of the club.
- (d) Make sure everybody working at the hut both reads and understands the club's health and safety policy.
- (e) Make sure everybody working at the hut is aware of all possible hazards in connection with use of the hut and any task to be done.
- (f) Choose a suitable competent person to complete each particular task.
- (g) Provide appropriate tools, materials and safety equipment to complete the task safely.
- (h) Take into consideration items covered in the guidelines for *Fire Safety* (nos. 3.1 and 3.2) and *Maintenance* (no. 5).
- (i) Hut manager or warden to keep health and safety issues under regular review during work.

Note: If viewing this .pdf while online then clicking on any [URL](#) will take you to that website.

Hut Guidelines

These guidelines have been produced by the Huts Group of the British Mountaineering Council and the Huts Advisory Group of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to assist those operating mountain huts in Britain.

Contact the BMC Huts Group by e-mail – huts@thebmc.co.uk or telephone 0161 445 6111.

Contact the MCoFS Huts Advisory Group by e-mail – huts@mcofs.org.uk

Websites: www.thebmc.co.uk and www.mcofs.org.uk

URLs: If any of the URLs (web addresses) given on the preceding pages are found to be 'dead links' please notify huts@mcofs.org.uk

Disclaimer: These guidelines were revised on the date shown below and the information herein is believed to be accurate at the time of writing. No responsibility can be accepted for any loss of benefit or entitlement arising through use of these guidelines – they are not intended to be definitive.

Version no. 3 – February 2015 [minor revns.]

These guidelines are updated periodically; to check on the currency of this version go to one of the websites above where the latest version will always be displayed.