



Landcare Notes

Personal safety

All Landcare groups and networks have a moral and legal obligation to minimise risk or injury to anyone involved in their activities by providing a safe working environment.

You must see health and safety as one of the core functions of the group and its operations. This Landcare Note outlines some of the important safety issues that you need to consider and offers information and references to deal with them.

Keeping people safe

Personal safety is accomplished by being alert to the risks and by making commonsense decisions about how to avoid them.

Responsibilities

Your responsibilities for personal safety, as a Landcare group, are a legal requirement as outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

There are two aspects about personal safety that you need to be clear about. First, you need to raise the confidence of anyone associated with Landcare activities so they see that personal safety is a priority for you. Second, you have an obligation to minimise the chance of harm to anyone associated with your activities.

Each individual also has an obligation to look after their own safety, particularly when they have been advised of the risks and how to minimise them.

Possible threats to safety

There is a range of circumstances relating to personal safety that you need to cover, including machinery and hand tool use, motor vehicles, fire, inappropriate clothing, inclement

weather, threats from animals, chemicals and other dangerous materials and noxious plants.

You also need to be aware of (and cover) the possibilities of potentially dangerous environmental locations such as working near water or potentially dangerous infrastructure such as fences, gates, stands and ladders etc.

Guidelines to safety

Personal safety considerations need to cover all members, all employees, all volunteers, observers and the general public. It is very much a risk management exercise (see Landcare Note 7.4: Risk Management: Why Worry?). The simple guidelines are:

- Know everyone who is involved in any of your activities. Register participants and check their levels of experience. Ask them if there is any pertinent medical history and/or allergies that you should know about.
- Check their clothing and footwear is appropriate for the activity. Supply protective gear if you can.
- Be aware of the on-site risks of any activity you're involved in. Remove, isolate or reduce the risk where possible. Otherwise, prepare people on how to cope with the hazard before they begin.
- Provide your volunteers with a brief at the start of the activity that includes what the task is and how to do it. That discussion should provide a forum for an interactive risk assessment – get everyone involved.
- Use equipment wisely and carefully remembering that specialised equipment should only be used by experienced, trained or qualified operators.
- Keep all equipment in top operational condition. As the organiser of the activity, you have a duty-of-care to avoid using poorly maintained equipment.



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- Treat chemicals with due respect.
- Aim to have a designated first aid officer (and a first aid kit) at all activities.

Approaches for maximising safety

There is not one special approach or tool used by organisations to ensure personal safety. Thinking about Personal Safety is part of your group's risk planning. It should be an integral part of your planning process and the tools outlined in Landcare Note 7.4: Risk Management: Why Worry?

Awareness is important in maximising safety. It is more than just good planning. It includes observation, diligence and modification to learn more about people and their abilities. In particular, look out for heat exhaustion, slips, trips and falls and hypothermia.

Consider creating a culture of a 'buddy system' where group members are looking after each other. Safety is everyone's responsibility.

It's still essential for you to carry insurance to cover the risk of personal injury. There will always be some level of risk exposure (see Landcare Note 7.3: Insurance for Landcare Groups).

When planning a safe workplace, you also need to consider what would happen if an emergency does occur. A nominated responsible person should be on-site always.

Safety Equipment

The value of personal protection equipment cannot be underestimated: consider boots, gloves, goggles, helmets, hats, rain-wear, sunglasses, sunscreen, water-bottles, first aid kits, high visibility vests and emergency communication devices. Encourage your members to wear appropriate gear and consider getting funding for your group to purchase safety equipment for your members.

Key tools

You may be required to follow a particular procedure for personal safety when working on public land. The land manager will advise if

there are any requirements from the agency responsible for that area.

We strongly advise you to familiarise yourself with *Creating a Safe Working Environment for the Victorian Landcare Program: Landcare Group Risk Prevention Toolkit* by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (2007) (see below).

This kit contains valuable information including forms such as a field day checklist; participant registration and consent, personal management plan, risk assessment, Jobsafe analysis worksheet, injury record and incident report.

The Toolkit has been developed to provide a standard set of guidelines to support groups such as yours achieve their safety responsibilities.

Further references

Department of Sustainability and Environment (2007) – *Creating a Safe Working Environment for the Victorian Landcare Program: Landcare Group Risk Prevention Toolkit*:
<https://www.landcarevic.org.au/resources/health-and-safety/>

Landcare coordinators in your region – contact your Catchment Management Authority

Worksafe (2006) – *Working Safely in Community Services*:
https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/211274/ISBN-Working-safely-in-community-services-2006-10.pdf

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 7.3: Insurance for Landcare Groups

Landcare Notes 7.4: Risk Management: Why Worry?

Acknowledgements



Victorian
Landcare
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Landcare Note 7.5

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