

Before you start, a risk assessment must be undertaken, and the five simple steps are explained below. It is important that any risks associated with your clean-up are identified, eliminated or controlled appropriately, and the findings of the risk assessment are shared with all participants. A generic risk assessment is available in this pack to assist you, along with guidance on conducting an event briefing before you begin.



HAZARD Is anything that may cause harm, e.g. road traffic, sharp items, working from height, etc.



RISK Is the chance, high or low, of somebody being harmed by the hazard, and how serious the harm could be.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advise the following five step approach;

Step 1 – Identify the Hazards

Take a look at your proposed work area and identify possible causes of harm or danger. Prioritise the hazards, concentrating on those that could cause the most harm or affect several people.

Step 2 – Identify who is at Risk

Young people, those experiencing their first event, or pregnant/new mothers could be at greater risk.

Those with a pre-existing medical condition may be at greater risk.

Members of the public who are also present in your proposed area of work.

Step 3 – Evaluate the Risks, and Ensure Adequate Control Measures are in Place

How likely is the hazard to cause harm, and then decide if you need to do more to reduce the risk. Some risks can still remain even after putting all the control measures in place.

You then need to prioritise those risks that are high, and remain aware of those that are medium and low.

Risks should then be controlled by using the following:

- Try a less risky option
- Prevent access to a hazard
- Reduce exposure to the hazard

Step 4 – Record Your Findings

You must record your findings, and a simple template is available in this pack. You must also share your findings with all participants of your event, and the document will form the basis for your event briefing.

Step 5 – Review and Revise Findings

Whilst on your event things might change that can have an impact on your risk assessment (e.g. a change in the weather). The risks should be constantly under review and actions taken to minimise changing risks. If the risks become too high, then the event should be finished early.

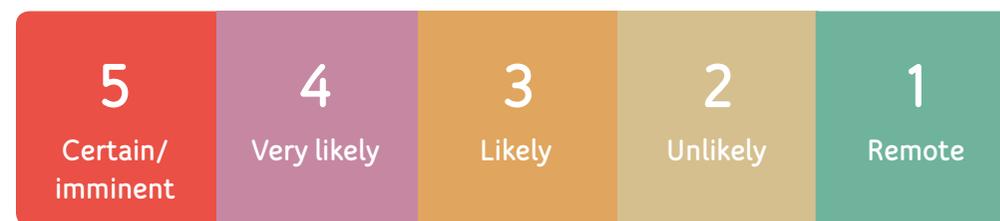
Assessing the Risk

When the hazards have been identified, make note of any existing precautions that are in place to control those hazards. Next, you need to try and identify what the 'worst case outcome' would be if someone were to be harmed by the hazard.

The five possible worst-case outcomes are:

- 5
Fatality Death of a participant or any other person whilst carrying out the activity
- 4
Severe Injury Major injury, such as fractures (other than fingers or toes), loss of consciousness, amputation, dislocation, injury as a result of violence, loss of sight or other eye injury, admission to hospital for more than 24 hours.
- 3
Lost Time Injury Injuries not listed above but cause a participant to be away from work or unable to do their normal work for more than three consecutive days after the day of the accident. Injuries might include sprained ankle, bad back, broken toe, or severe laceration to the hand.
- 2
Minor Injury Injuries which do not result in the participant being unable to do their normal work for more than three consecutive days, for example, small cut, minor burn or bruising.
- 1
No Injury As stated. Possible if the hazard can be eliminated.

Next, you need to decide how likely the hazard is to cause harm, once all the existing control measures have been taken into account, as follows;



The risk score is then calculated by multiplying the Severity by the Likelihood, and the result is classified in the following way;



Event safety briefings

The event briefing provides an opportunity to inform participants on the arrangements for your clean-up. This should include basic information such as, what to do with your full bags, the final meeting point and time, and the boundary of the event. It is the perfect opportunity to provide safety advice to all participants, and to highlight the risks identified in your risk assessment. This ensures that everyone is aware of what they should be doing to maintain their own safety along with others who may also be impacted (e.g. those passing-by). In addition, it can be used to promote the work you are doing and to seek support for more, similar activities.

To help you, a safety briefing and checklist has been put together overleaf.



Event safety briefings

Thank you for joining in with the activity today.

I am _____ and I am the event co-ordinator. The activity today is supported by Keep Wales Tidy, an environmental charity working in communities across Wales.

The task today is _____ and we will be finishing at ____ o'clock. The nearest toilet facilities are located _____. The nearest First Aid kit is located at _____, and _____ are trained First Aiders. I have with me a mobile phone for emergencies and anti-bacterial hand wipes or gel.

I will be taking some photos during the day, which Keep Wales Tidy uses to show the work it does. Please let me know if you are not happy to be photographed?

(Check suitability of footwear and clothing)

I can see that you are all wearing sturdy shoes and suitable clothes, which will protect you from _____

or

I can see that some of you are wearing sandals/ T-shirts/shorts, so you will need to _____

(Give out litter pickers, bin bags - general waste and recycling if available)

We are using two bags today; _____ colour bags for general waste, and _____ colour bags for collecting recycling. (Explain what waste goes in each bag)

As the weather is _____, we will be taking these precautions: _____

These are some of the hazards we might come across and how we are going to reduce the risks: (Refer to risk assessment and talk through control measures.)

Please work within sight of other volunteers at all times and watch out for their safety as well as your own. Let me know if you need to leave the activity before the end, just so we don't send out a search party!

If anyone has a medical condition which might affect their work, please let me know as we start working.

(If someone reports a medical concern, check that they have any necessary medication with them and that they feel the activity is suitable for them. Ask them to stay within sight of other workers at all times.)

(Ask a volunteer to countersign the risk assessment.)

At end of task

- Thank volunteers for their involvement.
- Take contact details so you can send a link to photos on Flickr.

General litter picking

Litter picking activity is not without its risks, but with some planning and careful consideration these risks can be controlled and minimise the likelihood of an accident happening. Below are some common considerations that should form part of your risk assessment and safety briefing, and additional guidance is available on these, along with specific types of clean up events.

Age and ability – it is advisable that litter picking should not be carried out for longer than one to two hours, and that this time should be adjusted for age (especially young people). Participants should stop if they become tired. Young people under the age 18 must be accompanied by an appropriate adult and supervised at all times.

Litter pickers – litter pickers must be used for collecting litter, and with a little practice it is possible to pick up most types of litter. When collecting litter, it is important not to over stretch or overreach, and although it can be frustrating some litter may have to be left if it is not possible to remove it safely.

Hygiene – good hygiene practice is important to stop the spread of illness. Whilst carrying out the clean-up, you should try to avoid touching your face with hands and be aware that the equipment will already have been used for litter picking activity before. You should thoroughly wash your hands when finished, especially before eating and/or drinking. Any existing cuts or broken skin should be covered with a waterproof plaster to reduce the risk of infection.

First aid – it is highly recommended that you carry with you a first aid kit for minor accidents, and you should have access to a telephone in case of emergency.

Sharps/needles – care should be taken to avoid any sharps and/or needles, especially those that may be hidden by other litter or vegetation. Sharps should not be placed inside your bin bag as it could cause injury to you and others who later collect the bag. Needles must not be picked up/collected and the local authority should be informed so that they can deal with it.

Working outdoors – when working outdoors, it is important to adjust your activity to take into account the weather conditions, and to make sure that participants are suitably dressed. For example, if it is cold and wet you might consider shortening the length of activity; wet weather can reduce visibility and make the ground slippery;



General litter picking

hot weather can lead to dehydration, sun burn and/or heat exhaustion; wind can cause problems with holding the bin bags.

Manual handling – care should be taken not to overfill the bin bags, and that the weight is manageable for the individual. If an item is too large to fit in a bin bag you should check the local arrangements for collection before attempting to move it.

Plants/animal bites – it is useful to know if any participants have a known allergy and this can be asked as part of the briefing. Care should be taken around plants and wildlife to minimise the risk.

Disturbing wildlife – it is important that wildlife isn't disturbed during your clean-up event, and this is even more important at certain times of the year, for example when birds are nesting. Litter that has been in the environment for a long time may house wildlife and care must be taken when handling.



Working near or on highways

Working near or on roads/highways poses one of the most significant risks associated with litter picking. It is important to control this risk as much as possible, and the following guidance aims to help you in doing that.

The following areas must not form part of the area that you are litter picking;

- Motorway
- Dual carriageway and/or trunk roads and/or slip roads
- Central reservation or roundabout on any road type

There is no simple formula that can be applied to determine whether your chosen area can be appropriately managed to avoid the risks associated with highways. In general, you should organise your activity at an appropriate time of the day, allow for current (and future) weather and road conditions, and avoid impeding or distracting road users. The following areas should be considered when completing your risk assessment;



Type of road and frequency of traffic – consideration should be given to the type of road (e.g. urban, rural, quiet cul-de-sac), the speed limit in the area (and whether it is observed), the frequency of traffic, and whether there is a footpath and/or verge (see above). Fast, high volume traffic would be highly inadvisable, whereas slow and low density would be more acceptable. Please remember that a vehicle does not have to be travelling at any great speed to cause significant injury.

Footpath and/or verge – where a footpath and/or verge is present, then the litter picking activity should be restricted to this area. Participants should refrain from reaching into the road/highway to collect litter, as a vehicle striking a litter picker could cause serious injury. It is recommended that where there is adequate space a safety zone is employed, leaving a gap of one metre between the road and the working area.

Size and age of group – the age of the group is important in determining whether or not participants will be able to follow the control measures you have put in place, and remember that younger people have a much lower perception of risk. The size of your group should take into the account the area in which you are doing your litter pick, for example, it may not be appropriate for 20 people to litter pick a single-track rural lane, whereas a housing estate with lots of green space would be.

Visibility – it is important that road users can see you and have the opportunity to react. There are a number of factors that can affect visibility, including wet weather, mist or fog, or bright or low sun; the time of day; and road features such as blind bends and/or brow of hills. Adjustments should be made, including postponement if the risks are too great.

Working in coastal areas

Before carrying out a litter pick on a beach or other coastal area, it is worth finding out a little bit more about your chosen site before running the activity. Below are some common areas that need consideration before you start, and many beaches have maps indicating much of the information;

Tides / cut offs – you should be aware of the time of the next high tide and plan your event accordingly. If possible, it is best to start your event on a receding tide, one to two hours after high water. If this is not possible, you should be aware of any areas of the beach/coastal area that can become cut off on an incoming tide, and ensure all participants are aware of this. Participants should not enter the water during the activity.

Rock fall – clean-up activity should not take place under any cliffs, especially in areas that have signage indicating the possibility of rock fall. It is recommended that you stay in open areas and work along the strandline where the majority of litter will be found.

Cliffs – if working on the coast path, care should be taken on the edge of cliffs, and activity should be limited to the footpath itself. On the exposed cliff, care needs to be taken if carrying the red bags as they can be caught by the wind.

Weather – the weather can have a bigger impact on individuals working in the coastal environment, and the length of clean-up activity should be modified to accommodate. Wind, rain and spray can make people feel colder in a shorter space of time, and if sunny the wind chill can hide the impact of the sun leading to sunburn.

Work area (slippery rocks, shingle) – by its very nature, coastal areas can be more hazardous under foot, and suitable shoes/boots should be worn. Rocks exposed by the tide are likely to be wet and slippery, and sand and shingle can be difficult to walk on.



Flares and unidentified containers – if unused flares are found washed ashore it should be left where it is, people asked to move away, and the Coastguard informed immediately. If large unidentifiable containers are washed ashore, they should be reported to the local authority who will have appropriate arrangements in place. Large items like this should not be moved without prior arrangement with the local authority.

Strandline – the strandline is a vitally important habitat for the health of the beach, so only foreign objects/litter should be removed from the beach.

Working on waterways

Working around waterways can be hazardous, but careful consideration to the factors highlighted below can ensure a safe clean-up event can take place. Participants should not enter the water at any stage to collect litter, and if you have identified an area with larger items in the watercourse then please contact your local Keep Wales Tidy officer for advice.

Water levels and current – before running your event, you should check the water level and the flow of the water, especially during and after periods of heavy rain. If the levels are high or too fast, then you should consider postponing your event until a later date.

Water entry (rescue equipment) – as previously stated, your clean-up activity should not include any participant entering the water to retrieve litter. If your chosen area has significant litter and/or waste in the water, then please seek further advice from your local Keep Wales Tidy officer. If the site conditions pose a risk to any participant accidentally falling into the water, then consideration should be given to appropriate personal rescue equipment, and whether any is sited nearby.

Work area (wet/slippery, uneven, banking) – when taking part in a clean-up event around watercourses, participants should be encouraged to wear appropriate footwear (such as boots) to help deal with slippery and or uneven ground that is likely to be in the work area. If working on the banking, care should be taken to ensure that view of the edge is not obscured by undergrowth, as well as concealing wildlife.

