

# Managing A Safe Scout Premises



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0845 300 1818

## Background

Everyone in England and Wales owes a common law duty of care not to cause injury to another person or to damage another's property. In Scouting terms, for example, this might mean a Scout Group informing a group of volunteers about the potential hazards of their HQ during a spring cleaning day and about any hazards they may be introducing in the form of chemicals or equipment.

It would be hard to justify having lower standards of health, safety and welfare for volunteers compared to paid staff simply because the law may not demand it. In any event complying with health and safety regulations *so far as is reasonably practicable* will go a long way to ensuring that if an injury is sustained a Scout Group can defend itself against any action for compensation or criminal prosecution.

The term '*so far as is reasonably practicable*' recurs throughout health and safety legislation. In broad terms this involves balancing the degree of risk or its potential seriousness against the money, time or trouble in minimising the risk.

In other words, if the risk or likelihood of injury or harm is insignificant and it would be very expensive to take precautions, such measures are likely to be deemed not reasonably practicable. A possible example of these criteria could be the cost of putting in measures to ensure that no one ever experiences paper cuts to their fingers.

Adoption of a risk assessment approach for items connected with a Scout premises is essential good practice to ensure that conditions are safe.

## Responsibility

It is important that the importance of the risk assessment process is appreciated by those who manage the premises and have a legal responsibility for its user's safety. This is likely to be the Group, District or County executive committee even if, where the premises is a campsite and there is a separate management committee to look after the day to day operations.

It is good practice for Executive Committees have an established system in place to enable Section Leaders to be able to report any problems with premises that they may come across during their regular use of it. This might just be a log book kept at the HQ that someone checks regularly, or for more urgent repairs, the appropriate contact details.

The different types of premises commonly found in Scouting are:

- Group, District or County/ Area headquarters
- Meeting places hired from a church or local authority
- Group, District or County/Area Campsites

## Risk Assessment

The next section goes through a risk assessment approach for a Scout premises and the table at the end of this factsheet shows examples of how that process can be applied.

## What is Risk Assessment?

Risk assessment can perhaps best be described as disciplined common sense applied to every day life. Whether descending a twisting staircase, crossing the road, or frying an egg, we all “do” risk assessment or, safety checks in one way or another every day. However, a structured approach makes the task easier and helps us to spot all the potential risks. There are just five steps to a proper risk assessment . . .

**One - Look for the hazards (how can people be hurt or damage caused):** stand back from the situation, and assess it. Identify all the hazards, and list them, concentrating on the significant ones e.g. a slippery floor, a heater, or very hot water.

**Two – Decide who might be harmed, and how:** think particularly about regular users who might have become accustomed to the presence of the hazard; about visitors who might not know that the hazard is present; and about young people, especially those with special needs, who simply might not appreciate the hazard.

**Three – Evaluate the risks (what controls exist already?):** consider the likelihood of the hazards causing harm to someone. If the heater is already guarded by a securely fixed grill, the risk is clearly low, and no additional precautions may be necessary. If the floor is always slippery, perhaps it needs ‘roughing up’ as a precaution – and certainly it is no place for physically active games!

Your responsibility is to do whatever is reasonably practicable to make the situation safe and your aim is to minimise all the risks by maintaining or adding to the precautions as necessary.

**Four – Record your findings (what additional controls are needed?):** you will always need to tell those involved in the situation what action they should take – and what actions they must not take!

Where the situation is one in which Scouting regularly takes place (e.g. ‘the Scout hut’, a District camp-site), your record may be a permanent one, such as an instruction sheet or card for users, who should be required to read it

before leading a Scouting activity in the particular situation. Regular users should be required to re-read it from time to time.

Date your Risk Assessment and put a date on it for reviewing it.

**Five – Review and revise:** you cannot assume that the hazards, and the risks, will stay the same for all time. So you must review your risk assessment from time to time, and revise it where necessary. This will almost certainly mean a revised record e.g. a new instruction sheet. It is good practice to fix a maximum time between reviews (e.g. not less than once every year for a Scout meeting place), even if you do not think that a review is actually needed.

Of course, it may be necessary to review your assessment in the light of changes to the premises or conditions much more frequently than you had originally thought. An out-of-date assessment is a hazard in its own right, because it may misleadingly encourage people to think that all the necessary precautions are in place.

## Where do I start?

The examples in the table at the end of the factsheet are not exhaustive but suggest some of the possible hazards, some of their associated risks and suggestions for appropriate control measures. In some cases they draw on incidents reported to Scout Insurance Services (Unity) in Lancing.

Every Scout premises will be different but the only way to discover your hazards is to go and have a look. A physical inspection is required so that all the hazards and their associated risks are identified and appropriate control measures adopted and put into place.

*Appendix 1* at the end of this factsheet shows an example of a risk assessment.

## Who should do the Risk Assessment?

This could be almost anyone, but ideally someone who has a reasonable ability to recognize some of the risks that may prevail on your premises.

It may be a parent with relevant experience in the workplace or just a friend of the Group or District with some time to give. The advantage of it not being a Leader (if possible) is that they are not a regular user and can pick up on things that sometimes get taken for granted because of familiarity. More than one person is a good idea. It spreads the workload and helps to spot things that one might miss.

In safety there is the recurring use of the phrase “*a competent person*”. This is probably well summed up as being someone with a fair level of knowledge but, equally as importantly, who is able to recognize when someone with more expertise is needed for a particular task.

### **Managing Maintenance**

It is a good idea to appoint one person to manage the undertaking of any work being done, even if others are actually carrying out the work.

This helps to ensure that jobs are carried out in a coordinated manner, authorized by one person and can be properly controlled.

For example this might prevent two groups of parents working on two different projects at your Scout HQ from putting each other in danger because one is repairing a bit of roof and the other decorating the room below.

It is very important that you keep good records of any works or maintenance carried out. This helps to prove, if needed, how regularly the premises is maintained and allows you to plan what needs to be done.

### **People**

The *Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* (HASAWA) applies to all people employed at work as does the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992 which identifies risk assessment as being a valuable tool in decreasing the chance of an injury or ill health occurring.

So the perception could be that since a Scout Group does not normally have any paid

employees this legislation does not apply. Certain parts of the HASAWA may however apply to volunteers and other members of the public on Scout premises.

It may happen that the Group has hired someone on a regular basis for example to clean the premises. In these cases if the Group has not hired that person as an employee but as a contractor for service the full implications of the HASAWA will not come into play. In case of doubt seek legal advice.

### **Other Relevant Items**

The Factsheets listed below can be found by going to [www.scouts.org.uk/safety](http://www.scouts.org.uk/safety) and following the links

#### **Alcohol**

Refer to Factsheet [FS185092 Alcohol and Scouting](#).

#### **Asbestos**

There is a requirement in law, relating to any Non-domestic Premises, to identify and record whether a premises contains asbestos and to manage any risk from this material.

Refer to Factsheet [FS320002 – Managing Asbestos](#)

#### **Chemicals and hazardous substances**

Almost every premises will have some kinds of chemicals present. These may be cleaning materials or fuels for stoves etc. It is important to have proper, safe storage for these and keep a log or folder with the data sheets for all of them.

Data sheets are available to download or from the manufacturer or may simply be as instructions on the container. These will help you to know how to store correctly and what to do in the event of an emergency involving the substance.

In the work place these are controlled by the COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) regulations and this may be particularly

relevant to campsites where they may use a number of different chemicals, especially if they run a swimming pool.

More detailed information can be found about this at the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## Electricity

There are two aspects to consider: the fixed wiring of the building and any 'portable' equipment plugged into it.

The fixed electrical wiring system should be tested at a regular interval and any remedial actions followed up. The time frame may vary but typically, in a workplace, this is every five years.

Checking your portable equipment is best done by someone with a reasonable level of competency and the regularity will vary on the type of use the equipment gets.

For example, the kettle in the Scout Hut might just need a visual check by users each time to ensure that the cord and plug look OK and the wires haven't been pulled out.

Useful information is available from:

The HSE – *Electrical Safety and You*

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg231.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg231.pdf)

## Fire Safety

There is a requirement in law to risk assess all non-domestic premises for fire safety. This can be included within the main premises risk assessment.

Further guidance is found in Factsheet [FS320007 Managing Fire Safety](#).

## Food Safety

Refer to Factsheet [FS320003 Food Safety](#) and additionally [FS320004 Camp Food Safety](#).

## Gas

If you have a need to store LPG gas bottles, used for your camping equipment, make sure that they

are in a secure and well ventilated storage area, ideally a separate cage or shed. Bulk LPG tanks should be inspected by the supplier every five years.

If you have mains or LPG fitted gas appliances or boilers for heating ensure they are regularly checked and serviced by a qualified Gas Safe engineer. The recommended interval is annually.

Your hall may use gas heaters. Fit carbon monoxide detectors and check them regularly. You may be using the hall for a sleepover or similar activity. In a recent tragedy in Spain, 17 young people died from carbon monoxide from a faulty heater while sleeping over at a youth club.

Useful information is available from:

- The Liquid Petroleum Gas Association [www.uklpg.org](http://www.uklpg.org)
- Carbon Monoxide Awareness [www.covictim.org](http://www.covictim.org)
- Gas Safe [www.gassaferegister.co.uk/](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/)

## Height – activity above floor level

This is a very common area for an accident and it is important that we plan what we do above the ground, even if it just means getting something stable to stand on to reach a top shelf, or getting someone else to help.

Doing maintenance or repair work around the premises or even accessing equipment for a troop night or camp needs to be thought about. Some simple ways to control our risk might be:

- Avoid being at height (e.g. lower a flagpole to paint it).
- Use a working platform with guard rails and toe boards (appropriate for long periods of maintenance work)
- Use ladders or stepladders...subject to risk assessment and only for light work for short periods of time.

Refer to Factsheet [FS320009 Falls from Height](#)

## Lifting and Carrying

Most Scout premises are packed with equipment of all sizes and shapes. Both leaders and young people are at risk from trying to carry or move items, whether in the HQ or even on camp.

It is so often the youngest Cub or patrol member that gets sent off to fill the water canister, or it is the largest of patrol tents that we only use once a year so it goes on the top shelf in the store, out of the way.

Where possible, break loads down to make them lighter and easier to move. Make sure they are packed into boxes or bags to be more secure. Use a trolley if you have one or simply get more people to help.

Useful information is available from:

The HSE – *Getting to Grips with Manual Handling*  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf)

Whilst much of this leaflet relates to workplaces there is also a lot of common sense we can apply to our Scout premises and a lot which we can pass on to the young people in our care to benefit them.

## Scouting for all

There is additional help at [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) by following the links to Scouting for all.

Refer to [Access to Scouting](#).

## Trees

We all take them for granted, but if you have trees on your premises you will need, from time to time, to check them. This particularly applies to older or larger trees.

Refer to Factsheet [FS 320008 Tree Safety Guidelines](#)

## Vehicles

Consider what vehicles access your premises, whether it is a Scout HQ or maybe a campsite. How do you control their speed?

Is there good lighting?

Are Scouts or other people likely to be in the same area as vehicles?

Is there any adult supervision when they do?

Have the Scouts been instructed about safety in the area? Have Drivers been?

Are there good warning signs up for drivers if necessary?

Are the main pedestrian areas closed off to prevent vehicle access?

## Water

Damage can be caused to premises by leaking pipes. Check pipes regularly, lag them to protect them from freezing. Perhaps turn the water off when vacating.

Some Scout premises, especially campsites, will also have showers and particular attention needs to be applied here about water quality and the potential for Legionella (Legionnaire's Disease).

Legionella is commonly contracted by inhaling tiny droplets of water contaminated with Legionella bacteria. This is normally present in water temperatures in the range of 20 – 45 degrees C.

The organism does not appear to grow below 20C or survive above 60 C. In addition to temperature, a source of nutrients (lime scale), is needed for the organism to multiply.

To present a risk this then needs the creation of the contaminated water into droplets (as in a shower) and the presence of particularly vulnerable people – very young or very old.

When you are undertaking the risk assessment of your premises consider:

- Is any of the water supply held in tanks?
- Are there long runs of pipe work?
- Are the showers used regularly?

Some preventative measures which will help to reduce risk are:

A point of use heater with minimal or no storage may be preferential to holding stored hot water.

Run the shower for a short while before getting in. Clean shower heads periodically to clean out the nutrients.

Be mindful that water in excess of 60C is getting very close to a scalding temperature and may need to be controlled.

Useful information is available from:

The HSE – *Legionnaire's Disease*  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/iacl27.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/iacl27.pdf)

Additionally an example Legionella Management Plan is available on [www.scouts.org.uk/safety](http://www.scouts.org.uk/safety)

### **Employers' Liability Insurance**

If the Group/District/County employs anyone they are required to insure against bodily injury or disease sustained by their employees. It is an offence not to display the certificate of insurance at the premises.

### **Public Liability Insurance**

The Scout Association arranges a Legal Liability Policy for claims by third parties, alleging legal liability arising out of loss, injury or damage occurring during any authorised Scout activity.

Contact Unity Insurance Services for additional advice.

Telephone 0845 0945 703

### **Use of facilities by children's playgroup**

If the headquarters is to be used by children under eight years of age the playgroup will be responsible for the registration but the premises will have to be checked by the local authority social services department before the initial registration and on at least a yearly basis afterwards.

### **Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 & 1984**

The occupier of premises owes a 'common duty of care' to their visitors, which includes trespassers. A 'common duty of care' means to take such care as is reasonable in the circumstance - a bit like for a risk assessment. The Act gives some guidance as to what is reasonable.

As an example the occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults so a bush

with poisonous berries like yew may have to be fenced off, the berries removed or remove the bush completely.

In order to minimize the risk of claims for personal injuries any anti-trespasser measures must be obvious and not be concealed. E.g. if barbed wire on a fence was selected as a deterrent it must be visible to potential intruder. Any local planning restrictions on the height of the fence should be followed.

### **Injuries & Incidents**

All injuries and incidents must be recorded in accordance with POR Chapter 7 and Unity Insurance Services at Lancing informed of the details as soon as possible. An investigation must be held as soon as possible to identify the underlying cause of the accident followed by updating of the risk assessment if necessary with a note of why the revision was required. In any accident investigation process the pertinent question to ask is 'what could have happened'. Do not assume that the outcome would be exactly the same the next time.

### **First Aid**

An adequate first aid box, together with an accident/incident book must be kept on the premises and a trained first-aider available when the premises are in use.

### **Reporting of defects**

Anybody, be it a volunteer, member of the public or paid employee has a duty to tell the person in charge of any defect or something that is unsafe so that appropriate action can be taken.

### **Emergency Checklist**

It is suggested that a written checklist list of what to do in a emergency, such as if a burst water pipe occurs, is prepared and is readily available to deal with this and similar emergencies (A kind of risk assessment in its own right).

### **Second hand Equipment**

Beware of this. The two real incidents below indicate what can go wrong:

a) Petrol pressure lantern

A Scout group acquired a petrol driven pressure lantern from items supplied for a jumble sale. Later, this was used at camp but because it had not been properly maintained incomplete combustion was occurring and poisonous carbon monoxide gas was being released. The first the Group knew that the lamp was faulty was when an unconscious Scout was found inside a tent.

b) Second hand furniture

A Scout group held a jumble sale and retained a donated sofa for use at their HQ. Later, whilst somebody was 'bouncing' on it, a metal spring broke, came through the fabric and caused a puncture injury.

### Sources of further information

#### The Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association, UKLPG

Camden House, Warwick Road  
Kenilworth  
Warwickshire  
CV8 1TH

[www.uklpg.org](http://www.uklpg.org)

#### Environment Agency (Head Office),

National Customer Contact Centre  
PO Box 544  
Rotherham  
S60 1BY

General Enquiries: 03708 506506.

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

#### The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

HSE Infoline - 0845 345 0055.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

#### Building Management

published by **Community Matters**,

12-20 Baron Street, London, N1 9LL

020 7837 7887 / 0845 8474 253

[mycommunityspace@communitymatters.org.uk](mailto:mycommunityspace@communitymatters.org.uk)

[www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)

#### Unity Insurance Services

Lancing Business Park

Lancing

West Sussex BN15 8UG

0845 0945 703

[scouts@unityins.co.uk](mailto:scouts@unityins.co.uk)

#### The Scout Association

Development Grants Board publication

[\*So you want a new meeting place – a guide to guarantee a successful project\*](#)

## Example of a simple Risk Assessment for a Scout Premises

Adapted from: *Five Steps to Risk Assessment*

Hazard Identified, Risks Arising & Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Date to be done	Person Responsible	Date Completed
<b>Building Construction</b>				
<p><b>Hazard</b> – anything that could cause harm. E.g. equipment or conditions.</p> <p><b>Risk</b> – the chance that someone will be harmed by the hazard.</p>	<p><b>Control</b> – an action, equipment or procedure that will help to reduce the potential for harm from a particular hazard.</p>			
<p><b>Fragile Roof</b> – Falling through, Debris falling on users</p>	<p>No ready means of access. Put up warning signs e.g. <i>Danger Fragile Roof – Use Crawling Boards</i></p>			
<p><b>Windows</b> – Broken glass, Forced Entry</p>	<p>Consider using wire mesh or toughened glass to lessen risk of breakage by vandalism. Locks. Control activities (use of heavy balls etc).</p>			
<p><b>Internal Window Sills</b> – Beavers / Cubs – run into protruding at head height</p>	<p>Reduce them flush to the wall or pad them to lessen injury.</p>			
<p><b>Blocked drainpipes &amp; gutters</b> – Slippery ground, worse if frozen</p>	<p>Regular inspection and cleaning out.</p>			
<p><b>Access</b> – Damage, Loss of facilities</p>	<p>Contact Local Police Crime Prevention Officer for advice. Security lighting, secure fencing, regular checks.</p>			

Hazard Identified, Risks Arising & Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Date to be done	Person Responsible	Date Completed
<b>Services</b>				
<b>Gas Supply –</b> Explosion, Fire, asphyxiation.	Use HSE approved gas fitter (Gas Safe registered) for work on fittings and appliances.  Good preventative maintenance.  Turn off isolation valve when vacating premises.			
<b>Water –</b> Leaks, Burst Pipes	Lag pipes, check regularly, drain system in winter if necessary or turn off when vacating.			
<b>Sewer and Waste Water –</b> Leaks, Blockage, Disease	Regular Inspection			
<b>Central Heating Boiler / Hot Water System –</b>  Release of gases to building. Loss of use.  Hot radiators / heaters	Regular maintenance by a competent person.  Install carbon monoxide alarm.  Use appropriate guards on heaters.			
<b>Electricity - Overloaded Sockets –</b>  Electrocution  Fire  <b>Trailing / Damaged Leads –</b>  Tripping	Check equipment leads & plugs regularly. Remove anything substandard.  Use a competent person for repairs and major inspections.  Isolate supply as necessary.			

Hazard Identified, Risks Arising & Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Date to be done	Person Responsible	Date Completed
<b>Entrances &amp; Exits</b>				
<b>Obstructions –</b> Trips and falls Unable to operate doors in emergency <b>Poor Lighting</b> <b>Uneven Surfaces</b>	Ensure Fire Doors are unlocked and clear at all time. Check outside too. Install good lighting (plus emergency lighting) on exit routes. Practise fire drill at least once each term with all users (sections).			
<b>Storage</b>				
<b>Combustible Materials –</b> Fire <b>Rubbish –</b> Disease / Vermin	Careful storage in containers. Remove other potential ignition sources. Remove all rubbish, store food in proper containers or remove altogether where possible.			
<b>Camping Equipment –</b> Rot, Mildew Lifting Heavy Kit Storing at Height	Ensure kit is put away dry and store is kept dry and aired. Break down into manageable amounts. Work together. DON'T expect Cubs/Scouts to lift things that are too heavy (however willing). Put heavy things low down / Light things up high. Check ladders and steps are safe and work in pairs.			

Hazard Identified, Risks Arising & Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Date to be done	Person Responsible	Date Completed
<b>Gas Cylinders and Appliances –</b> Leaks, fire / explosion  Hoses in poor condition	Store cylinders securely outside, on area free of combustible material but not below ground level, away from drains & keep upright. – <i>Refer to advice from LPG Association web site.</i>  Train users. Check before use.  Ensure good ventilation when changing cylinders.			
<b>Kitchen</b>				
<b>Sharp objects –</b> Cuts	Reduce use of breakable glass and control access to sharp knives.  Dispose of broken glass carefully (wrapped to protect sharp edges)			
<b>Food and Drink –</b> Food poisoning Vermin Slipping on spills	Good training is a must. Refer to factsheet on <i>Food Safety FS320003.</i>  Label drinking water.  Avoid leaving food in premises where possible.  Clean up spills promptly. Ensure appropriate cleaning equipment is available			
<b>Hot Surfaces – Burns and Scalds</b>	Use signage. Train users. Avoid deep fat fryers.			
<b>Toilets / Washrooms</b>				
<b>Bacteria -</b> Disease  <b>Legionella -</b>	Regular inspection and cleaning of facilities. Good supply of toilet paper, soap, towels / hand drying facilities.  Check and run hot water systems. De-scale and disinfect showerheads. Periodic check by a competent person.  Use 'heat at source' system to avoid storing hot water.			

Hazard Identified, Risks Arising & Persons at Risk	How Is The Risk Controlled? What Further Controls Are Needed?	Date to be done	Person Responsible	Date Completed
<b>Cleaning Materials –</b> Fumes, Chemical burns	Must do a COSHH* risk assessment, which applies to all chemicals on the premises. Train users. Read labels carefully.  Have secure storage for all chemicals.			
	<i>* COSHH – Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations</i>			
<b>Surrounding Land</b>				
<b>Grass, Rubbish, Uneven Ground –</b> Risk of fire, trips and cuts	Cut grass regularly. Clear rubbish.  Walk and assess the area before running an activity			
<b>General Reminder</b>	<b>Set a REVIEW Date...make it at least annually!</b>			

