



**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

SOP-024 VOLUNTEERS

PROCEDURE DETAILS:

Version: September, 2005

Approved by:

Operational from:

To be Reviewed: September 2006

1 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to specify the Occupational Health, Safety and Injury Management requirements for volunteers and staff supervising volunteers, in the Department for Environment and Heritage (the Department).

2 Scope

This procedure applies to:

- All volunteers working within or under the direction of the Department
- DEH employees working with or supervising volunteers

3 References

- Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare Act, 1986 (OHS&W Act)
- Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare Regulations, 1995 (OHS&W Regulations)
- Workers Rehabilitation & Compensation Act, 1986 (WRC Act)
- Commissioner's Standard 1 – A Planned Workforce (Attachment A)
- WorkCover Audit Report
- Volunteers Protection Act 2001
- Standard Operating Procedure 001 Risk Management

4 Definition of Terms

- Commissioners Standard 1 – A Planned Workforce (Attachment A) defines *volunteering* as follows:

People undertaking defined activities

- Of their own free will;
- Without payment (other than out-of-pocket expenses); and
- Which will be of benefit to the community and the agency concerned.

For the purposes of the OHS&W Act where a person performs work for an employer gratuitously, that person shall be deemed to be employed by the employer.

5 Responsibilities and/or Authorities

5.1 Worksite Managers/Supervisors

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that:

- this procedure is implemented at all locations under their control that work with volunteers.
- all volunteer projects are registered and that staff supervising volunteers (Liaison Officers) have the necessary skills and experience to supervise a work group and are familiar with regional/district priorities.

5.2 Liaison Officers (staff who supervise volunteers)

The Liaison Officer shall:

- ensure that a risk assessment of the activities to be undertaken has been conducted prior to the commencement of work, which includes the identification of reasonably foreseeable hazards
- coordinate the safety requirements expected of the volunteer or volunteer group
- ensure that the Volunteer Safety Coordinator (see below) has been provided with adequate training
- ensure that volunteers are provided with
 - a clear description of the task to be performed
 - supervision appropriate to the level of identified risk
 - induction and training specific to the task.

5.3 Volunteers

- Each volunteer group is encouraged to appoint a suitable volunteer member to act as the Volunteer Safety Coordinator for that group.
- Volunteers with relevant experience may also be nominated within groups from time to time to supervise other volunteers.
- Volunteers have a responsibility to
 - take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and to avoid adversely affecting the health or safety of any other person while undertaking work for or on behalf of the Department
 - act according to reasonable instructions from the Liaison Officer, Volunteer Safety Coordinator and volunteer supervisor
 - follow appropriate practices and procedures for the tasks that they undertake and the equipment they use
 - follow the Department's hazard and incident reporting mechanisms.

5.4 Volunteer Safety Coordinator

The Department will provide the Voluntary Safety Coordinator with relevant training in conjunction with the departments Liaison Officer or other relevant regional staff. The Liaison Officer and Volunteer Safety Coordinator will ensure that:

- risk assessments are conducted during planning and prior to commencing projects

- there is an induction of new volunteers or volunteers who have not actively participated in the group for twelve months or more
- volunteers have the appropriate skills for the tasks that they are undertaking
- OHSW information is communicated to the volunteer group
- accident/incident investigations are conducted in conjunction with the region

6 Procedure

6.1 Risk Management

- When planning volunteer projects the Liaison Officer must ensure that a risk assessment of the identified activities has been undertaken in consultation with the volunteer group.
- Strategies must be implemented to eliminate or control any identified hazards and the risks and control strategies must be communicated to all volunteers and staff associated with the project.
- Projects with an identified high level of risk of serious injury should not be undertaken unless the risk is eliminated or effectively controlled.
- A member of staff or a trained volunteer must complete the risk assessment.
- Documentation of the risk assessment must be kept on file for audit, incident investigation and claims management purposes.
- The Department's standard operating procedure SOP-001 Risk Management explains the risk assessment process, and provides a copy of the Risk Register form, which should be completed and retained.
- A first aid kit must be accessible to volunteer workers at all times.
- Strategies must be implemented to ensure safe evacuation of volunteers in the case of an emergency or injury.
- Prior to commencement of work, volunteers must establish contact with the Liaison Officer in charge of the worksite.

6.2 Duty of Care

- Under the Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare Act, 1986, the Department has a duty of care to all persons performing work for the agency, including volunteers. Under the OHS&W Act volunteers are deemed to be employees of the Department.
- Volunteers must take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety while working and to avoid adversely affecting the health and safety of any other person.
- Volunteers are encouraged to disclose to their volunteer group any medical condition that may put themselves or others at risk and in any event should not knowingly undertake any task that may put themselves or others at risk.

6.3 Registration

- Managers and Liaison Officers must ensure that the Volunteer Project Commencement Advice Form is completed prior to the commencement of any services or tasks that involve volunteers.
- Volunteer groups should ensure that an attendance record is maintained (including names, dates and times) for every volunteer activity.

6.4 Health, Safety & Injury Management

- The Department must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain a safe working environment, including safe systems of work and keeping plant and substances in a safe condition.
- Volunteers must be provided with information, instruction, training and supervision as far as is reasonably necessary to ensure that they are safe from injury and risks to health while undertaking work for the Department.
- Volunteers must ensure that they are suitably attired for the work they are to perform, wear appropriate safety equipment and follow reasonable instruction.

6.5 Induction

- Volunteers shall be provided with adequate induction and orientation to a park or location within which they will be working as a volunteer for the Department. The Liaison Officer or a nominated volunteer can provide this.
- Induction and orientation shall be provided for individuals and should be tailored directly to the activity being undertaken at a particular site.

6.6 Hazardous Work

- Liaison Officers in conjunction with the Volunteer Safety Coordinator shall ensure volunteers adopt safe systems of work by ensuring risk elimination and/or control measures are implemented and appropriate procedures and practices are adopted.
- Volunteers are asked to immediately report any hazards identified during their activities to the group supervisor or the Liaison Officer, so that appropriate actions can be implemented to reduce the risk of injury or ill-health.
- In the event of an injury or near miss incident, volunteers are asked to complete an Incident Report Form (IR001) and forward it to the Liaison Officer within 24 hours. The Liaison Officer should then follow the Department's reporting and investigation processes and ensure that an Incident Investigation is conducted within seven days.

6.8 Claims for Compensation

Any claim for compensation should be lodged with the district manager who will forward it to the Department's OHS&W Unit for consideration.

7 Documentation (Record Keeping)

- The responsible site must maintain the following documentation for the volunteer group:
 - register of project activities and attendance
 - site induction records (consider developing proforma checklist)
 - training records (including general induction)
 - register of members' licences and certificates
 - risk assessment records
- The Department's Community Liaison Unit shall retain completed Volunteer Project Commencement Advice forms (pink forms)
- The Liaison Officer shall also retain a copy of risk assessment records.