

12.24 Work party safety

The intent of this document is to encourage safety. Work party participants are expected to act responsibly at all times. When undertaking a Co-op work party, the hazards encountered can be diverse and will vary depending on the site and the work being undertaken. The following list identifies some potential hazards associated with work parties and sites, and provides strategies that should be implemented to manage and minimise the potential risk.

Hazards in the environment

Terrain and vegetation

- Steep, uneven, slippery surfaces; animal burrows, or tripping hazards; long grass that may obscure potential hazards; over head branches.
- Look for poor structural trees or hanging limbs, and avoid working under such trees
- Do not work under the canopy of trees during strong winds

Weather Exposure

- Hazards include dehydration, sunburn, cold, heat, wet or windy weather
- Be aware of the weather conditions and take appropriate precautions

Wildlife

- Hazards include snakes, spiders, insects, kangaroo, deer
- Avoid walking through long grass
- Do not lift rocks or logs unless necessary
- Be aware there are dangerous snakes and spider species found in the area
- If a snake or spider is located, do not approach and inform other group members

Sharp Objects

- Hazards include broken glass, barbed wire, dumped rubbish and debris
- Wear sturdy gloves to pick up broken glass, barbed wire, rubbish and debris.
- Before kneeling down, check the ground for sharp objects

Water Bodies

- Avoid working alone beside water where possible
- Do not work in water bodies.

Hygiene

- Ensure gloves are worn when handling soil and mulch
- Apply first aid to any cuts or scratches immediately

Infrastructure

- Do not commence any activity that involves digging of the tracks without permission of the Work Party Coordinator or the Building Committee. The Power is located at a nominal depth of 600mm, and is generally located in the centre of the track (and then to powerboxes), but this is not always the case and the location should be checked prior to any work taking place.

- Always be aware of the location of overhead powerlines, and do not undertake any activity that may lead to contact with them (e.g. felling trees, using ladders)

Working on your Own

Participants are encouraged to work with at least one other person at a Work Party and to always let someone know that you are out in the bush.

Health and safety when working

General

- Drink water regularly.
- Rotate tasks to minimise overexertion of individuals
- Vary tasks to prevent repetitive strain injuries and change positions regularly to minimise strain in joints
- Bend from the knees and not from the back to get close to the ground or in a kneeling position to avoid back and hamstring strain
- Be cautious of objects near the eyes; it may be necessary to wear protective eyewear
- Watch out for traffic if working near a road or track; work from the verge not the road.
- Monitor your own wellbeing – take a break when you need to.
- Monitor each other – give someone a break if they need it.

Using tools

- All tools should be used in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and should only be used for their intended purpose.
- **Cutting tools:** make sure that all parts of the body are kept behind the cutting edge of a tool; watch where the free hand is placed when cutting
- **Using a fork or shovel:** make sure feet are a safe distance from the tool and that your feet and other peoples' feet are well clear of the fork or shovel
- **Using a shovel:** when pushing a shovel into the ground, use the ball of your feet rather than the arch; to lift soil or rocks etc bend the knees not the back; avoid lifting and twisting.
- **Using a mattock or pick:** ensure feet are on stable ground, and the body is in a balanced position with weight evenly distributed on legs to minimise stress on the lower back; lift the head of the mattock up to head height - avoid swinging past the head; maintain a minimum of 3 metres from others.
- **Wheelbarrows and trailers:** position yourself or the wheelbarrow/trailer so as to minimise the need for twisting your back; avoid over-filling.
- **Using a hammer or mallet:** only lift the mallet/hammer level to head height; do not swing back past head; maintain a distance of 3 metres from others when hammering. When hammering stakes, hold far enough down the stake to minimise the chance of hitting a hand.
- **Chainsaws:** only people who have completed a certified 'operate and maintain chainsaw' course may use a chainsaw at work parties (this is a condition of our insurance). It is **mandatory** for anyone operating a chainsaw at a Co-op work party to wear appropriate personal protective clothing i.e. chaps, helmet with visor, earmuffs and sturdy boots. The chainsaw work must be done in pairs – one operator and one person to ensure the safety of the operator and others. Work party participants must be aware at all times of the chainsaw operation and keep a safe distance. Parents are responsible for ensuring the safety of children.

Work party check list for participants

What to wear, what to bring

- Wear protective clothing appropriate to the activity:
 - For track work: protective, sturdy footwear; work gloves; long trousers and long sleeved shirt
 - For weeding: sturdy walking shoes; sunglasses; long trousers and long sleeved shirt; a hat; wet weather gear
- Any medication you require
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Drinking water
- A snack
- A mobile phone, if you have one
- Equipment appropriate to the activity:
 - For track work, this could be: shovel; rake; fork; mattock; pick; wheelbarrow; trailer; crowbar; broom; mallet etc
 - For weeding, this could be: weeding fork; secateurs; mattock; spade or trowel; bush saw; knife.
 - Other equipment: stakes; hammers; water back packs; rake hoes

At the start of the work party:

- Read the safety sheet
- Sign the attendance sheet
- Inform yourself of the location of the first aid kit is (or who has it)
- Listen to the instructions of the work party coordinator; make sure you understand what you are going to do; ask questions.

During the work party

- Try not to work alone. Stay in contact with the rest of the group (particularly important when walking and weeding in the bush)
- Take reasonable care to work safely.
- If you identify a hazard, make sure others are aware of it and endeavour to ensure everyone working with you is safe from this hazard.
- Let someone know if you have to leave for any reason
- Children must be accompanied by their parents (or guardian) responsible for actively supervising children (taking the lead in ensuring safe distances from hazards etc) whilst they themselves actively participate in the work party.