



**Four Marks**  
Allotment Association

## **Health and safety on the allotments**

October 2020

### **Introduction**

No activity carried out on our allotment is risk-free. As a consequence, all users of the allotments need to take health and safety seriously in order that risks to ourselves and others can be minimised and prevented.

The foregoing policy is based on recommendations from The Allotments Regeneration Initiative<sup>1</sup>.

### **Our obligations**

Civil law (Occupiers' Liability Act 1957) requires all plot-holders to have a duty of care to anyone accessing their plot, and the pathways for which they are responsible. This includes authorised and unauthorised visitors. Consequently, as an association, we have a communal duty to ensure that common areas and main access paths are safe to use. The law requires that in all these areas we exercise at least a 'reasonable' level of care regarding safety. Although unlikely, a claim could be made for negligence when an individual suffered an injury because we didn't take reasonable precautions. It is not possible in English law to exclude liability, for example by way of a notice. We are also obliged to comply with other laws, such as those regarding environmental and wildlife protection.

### **Our policy**

Our Health & Safety Policy, which is summarised in this document, is also implemented through our Constitution, Rules, Handbook, Newsletters, and Web site as well as the introduction to the site provided by the membership secretary. In addition, seven times a

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<sup>1</sup>The Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI) was a consortium led by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and largely funded by the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation. During 2010–11 it produced perhaps the largest body of advice for allotment societies on a wide range of topics covering the running of an allotment society and site.



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year, i.e. monthly inspections from April – October, a risk and hazard assessment is undertaken by Committee members. From these reports appropriate actions are taken both to minimise hazards and risks, and to update this policy.

- A **hazard** is something that can cause injury, for example, using power tools, exposed sharp edges and contaminated soil. Hazards can sometimes be removed, but may be inevitable.
- **Risks** are the potential threats caused by the hazards, for example injury from a hidden sharp edge, a burn. Risks can usually be avoided.
- **Injuries** and “**near-misses**”, and any other safety-related issues must be reported to a member of the Committee for recording so that any existing hazard or risk can be eliminated and prevented in the future.

Any plots that are let to new plot-holders should be subject to a risk assessment and considered risk free. In addition, the membership secretary will advise them of FMAA health & safety policy and any known hazards on the site. Also, bear in mind we are legally responsible for the safety of anybody who may enter our plots.

### General safety rules

- It is recommended that plot-holders should not work alone. However, if that cannot be avoided they should inform someone where they are, and their likely return time. They should also be advised to carry a mobile phone to summon assistance if required.
- Emergency numbers are posted on the notice-board and regularly updated.
- Plot-holders should ensure that their plot and access points are free from hazard: hazards may include sharp edges, exposed nails, improperly stored tools, hazards hidden within undergrowth such as discarded tools, improperly stored dangerous materials such as those listed below.
- Plot-holders must acquaint themselves with, and adhere strictly to, the guidelines regarding storage, usage and disposal of hazardous materials such as glass, pesticides, fertilisers, asbestos cement, oil, and fuel. These must be securely stored in the proper containers, and well away from possible reach by children.



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- Plot-holders should acquaint themselves with the safe use, and storage, of tools, particularly power tools. In keeping with the guidance in The Handbook they should also seek a briefing on the use of powered lawn mowers and strimmer if they are not familiar with their operation. They are also strongly advised to make use of the Personal Protective Equipment, namely protective eye-wear, helmet, ear defenders and mesh face guard.
- Plot-holders should be vigilant for rats, rabbits and other vermin, and inform a member of the Committee if evidence of vermin (dead or alive) is observed.
- Plot-holders should report vandalism or other evidence of intruders to a member of the committee for reporting to the police.
- Plot-holders should ensure that the gate is kept locked at all times.

### **Risk assessment**

Seven times a year, the Committee will carry out a risk assessment of the site. This requires two Committee members touring the site, identifying hazards, assessing risks, and deciding on actions – see Appendix 1.

Risk assessment involves listing potential risks caused by these hazards, assessing the frequency that people are exposed to those hazards, the probability of injury and the impact of such injury.

### **Insurance**

FMAA uses Ageas Insurance Limited and the broker is Shield Total Insurance. It is a bespoke Allotment Insurance policy.

Coverage for 2019 includes:

- Public & Products Liability (£5,000,000). This is for claims brought by third parties against FMAA or FMAA members for bodily injury and property damage;
- Employers' Liability (£10,000,000). This is for any claims brought by voluntary helpers for bodily injury (e.g. Working Parties)
- Trustee Person's Indemnity (£100,000). This is for claims brought against FMAA Committee members following allegations of wrongful acts.

There is no insurance cover for:

- FMAA/Personal Property, Equipment & Possessions
  - Personal Accidents
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## **Appendix 1.**

### **FMAA Risk Assessment**



<b>Risk</b>	<b>Persons at risk</b>	<b>Likelihood (H=3, M=2, L=1)</b>	<b>Severity (H=3, M=2, L=1)</b>	<b>Overall risk rating</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Control measures</b>	<b>Actions require</b>  <i>Indicated from rating on Risk Matrix</i>
Power Tools / Machinery	Tenant	Medium			Operating machinery carries a medium level of risk unless the appropriate safety equipment is worn and the machinery is operated correctly. Injuries to hands, feet and face need to be guarded against.	Instructions for the use of machinery lie with the owner/operator. If using FMAA machinery it is a requirement that tenants wear the recommended safety equipment when operating machinery. If operating tenant-owned machinery the committee strongly advises the use of the available safety equipment.	



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	Other tenants & visitors	Low			When strimmers and mowing machines are being used on an adjacent plot, stones and other flying objects can cause injuries.	The instructions for these items of equipment make particular reference to the dangers. It is the responsibility of the operator to take due care.	
	Children & dogs	High			Children can act unpredictably exposing themselves to risk from machinery.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that children are supervised. When young children are present on a plot, cultivators or strimmers should only be used where there are two adults – one operating, one supervising. No children to operate machinery under any circumstances. Dogs are to be kept on a leash on the pathways and common areas.	



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Weed killers, pesticides and other chemicals	Tenant	Low			There is a risk if chemicals are not used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.	Pesticides only to be used as a last resort. Identify the pest correctly. Determine if pesticides are actually required. Advise allotment holders using pesticides is indicated. All chemicals should be used and sprayers etc. rinsed after use, in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. If chemicals are held on a tenant's plot they should be stored securely and clearly identifiable. Troughs must not be used to rinse sprays or containers.	
	Children	High			Children can act unpredictably exposing themselves to risk from chemicals.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that children are supervised.	



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Garden tools and equipment	Tenant	Low			Injuries to hands and feet if equipment is not used correctly.	Garden tools and equipment should be used correctly and appropriate gloves & footwear worn as necessary.	
	Other tenants & visitors	Negligible				Garden tools and equipment should not be left on common paths where they could be a trip hazard or left available for others to use.	
	Children & dogs	Medium			Children can act unpredictably exposing themselves to risk from garden tools & equipment.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that children are supervised.	
Overhanging branches	All	Low			Overhanging branches can cause injuries.	Low hanging branches and dangerous branches should be reported to the FMAA Committee so that appropriate action may be taken.	



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Trip hazards	All	Low			Poorly maintained paths and the entrance can present a trip hazard to tenants, visitors and children.	It is the responsibility of all tenants to maintain their paths and to assist in the maintenance of common paths.	
Water	All	Low			Water butts/baths can be a hazard to young children.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that children are supervised. Troughs must not be used to rinse sprays or containers or garden tools and equipment.	
Bonfires	Tenant	Low			There is an inherent danger in a bonfire spreading if unattended.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to conform to the rules covering bonfires. Means of extinguishing fire should be at hand. A Committee member must supervise all burnings which should only take place at organised 'work parties'.	



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	Children	Medium			Children can act unpredictably exposing themselves to risk from bonfires.	It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that children are supervised.	
Rats and other vermin	All	Negligible			Rats can carry Weil's disease. Although this is rare it is a serious disease.	The presence of rats should be reported to the Parish Council. Where rat poison has been laid down, notices are to be displayed to inform tenants. Poison for rats should only be used in closed off areas such as sheds or chicken runs in the appropriate holders to prevent accidental poisoning of the myriad of animals that use the allotments. Alternatively contact a committee member who may be able to advise and initiate trapping.	



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**Risk matrix**

		Potential severity of harm		
		Slightly harmful 1	Harmful 2	Extremely harmful 3
Likelihood of harm occurring	Highly unlikely 1	Trivial 1	Tolerable 2	Moderate 3
	Unlikely 2	Tolerable 2	Moderate 4	Substantial 6
	Likely 3	Moderate 3	Substantial 6	Intolerable 9