

## Workplace Health & Safety Policies and Procedures

### Definitions

This safety kit is designed to cover all employees of MLI in all situations, whether it be in the office, on a site visit, or at a field day.

MLi refers to Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc.

Volunteers refers to:

- voluntary members of MLI committees,
- participants involved in field days or workshops organised by MLI staff, and
- school children involved in School Round Robins organised by MLI staff.

A project may refer to a meeting, field day, workshop, or school Round Robin, and a project site refers to the location of such meeting, field day, workshop, or school Round Robin.

The Group refers to staff members of MLI, either individually or collectively.

### Guidance on the Work Health and Safety Laws

Over a period of many years, federal and state authorities have been working toward a harmonised set of Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws to be adopted across all Australian jurisdictions.

The information in this guide is designed to assist in providing a safe environment for the participation of everyone. Whether the duties under the Act apply or not, the intention of the laws is to achieve a level of safety management that is both practical for those that must apply the principles and provides a safe work environment for all participants.

The following is a general explanation of the application of the WHS Act in relation to groups who involve volunteers. Further information on the WHS Act can be sourced at <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au>.

#### Volunteers, Groups and the WHS Act

Previously, volunteers were not consistently recognised in the legislation. In the new WHS Act, volunteers are defined as workers. To properly explain how duties are applied in the WHS Act, there are a few important definitions:

#### Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)

A PCBU is the main duty holder under the WHS Act. They are usually the employer. A group or organisation is a PCBU if they employ one or more paid workers.

#### Worker

A worker is any person who carries out work for a PCBU in any capacity including as a volunteer.

## What are the Duties?

### MLi (as a PCBU)

MLi must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all of its workers, including volunteers. This primary duty is qualified by 'so far as reasonably practicable'. This means that MLi does not have to guarantee that no harm will occur, but must do what is reasonably able to be done to ensure health and safety. In determining what is reasonably practicable a number of factors are taken into account, such as the nature of the work, the risks involved, the location of the work, and what can be done to eliminate or minimise the risks.

The primary duty of MLi includes ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable:

- The provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety;
- The provision and maintenance of safe equipment, tools and structures and safe systems of work;
- The safe use, handling and storage of equipment, tools and structures;
- The provision of adequate facilities for the welfare at work of workers, including volunteers (e.g. toilets, first aid facilities);
- The provision of information, training and instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from their work.

### Workers

Workers, including volunteers, also have duties under the Act, however they are again duties based on what a reasonable person would do. The duties are as follows:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety;
- Take reasonable care to ensure they don't affect the health and safety of other people, for example, other volunteers and members of the public;
- Comply, so far as they are able, with any reasonable instruction that is given to them by MLi;
- Co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure that MLi has provided to them.

While volunteers have duties and there are penalties for not carrying out those duties, volunteers are unlikely to be prosecuted.

### Officer Duties

An officer can be a volunteer or paid worker and is someone in a position where they make, or participate in making, decisions that affect the whole or a substantial part of MLi and the way in which it operates, e.g. the management committee.

An officer of MLi must exercise due diligence to ensure that MLi complies with its duties. Exercising due diligence as an officer means taking reasonable steps to:

- Learn and keep up to date with safety matters;
- Understand the work of MLi and the associated risks;
- Ensure that MLi has available, and uses, processes to manage risks;
- Ensure that MLi has a process for communicating and receiving safety information.

One very simple way to help meet the duty is to include health and safety as a standing agenda item for management committee or board meetings.

It should be noted that a volunteer who is an officer of MLi cannot be prosecuted for failing to comply with their duties under the WHS Act.

## Codes of Practice

Codes of practice are practical guides to achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act and the NSW WHS Regulations.

An approved code of practice applies to anyone who has a duty of care in the circumstances described in the code. In most cases, following an approved code of practice would achieve compliance with the health and safety duties in the WHS Act. Codes of practice deal with particular issues and do not cover all hazards or risks that may arise. The health and safety duties require duty holders to consider all risks associated with work, not only those for which regulations and codes of practice exist.

Approved codes of practice are admissible in court proceedings. Courts may regard an approved code of practice as evidence of what is known about a hazard, risk or control and may rely on the code in determining what is reasonably practicable in the circumstances to which the code relates.

Codes of Practice at Safework Australia can be sourced at the website <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA>.

## Common Law

Common law duties apply to all of those involved in an activity whether they have duties under the WHS Act or not. The basic Common Law duty is that volunteers and others are owed a general duty of care and that organisations must take reasonably practicable steps to prevent injury, loss or harm.

# Safety Policy and Implementation Guidelines

## 1 Occupational Health and Safety Policy

The activities of MLI shall be carried out in a manner that will protect the health and safety of its employees, volunteers, clients and members of the community. Health and safety is the responsibility of all personnel involved at MLI's workplaces.

To facilitate the implementation of this policy, MLI shall:

- 1) Provide and maintain healthy and safe work areas and safe equipment;
- 2) Provide the information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure the safety of all staff and volunteers;
- 3) Require all staff and volunteers to adhere strictly to all safety regulations and codes of practice;
- 4) Develop and maintain emergency procedures which, in the event of an accident, minimise harmful effects;
- 5) Require all MLI members to report hazards (or hazardous practices) to their supervisor;
- 6) Require all staff and volunteers to accept that safe work practice is the responsibility of every person taking part in MLI activities.

## 2. General Safety Management

### 2.1 QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCE

#### 2.1.1 Qualifications

Any member with team leading or field supervision responsibilities should have attained the following qualifications:

- Senior or Workplace Level 2 First Aid Certificate;
- An approved\* course in Work Health and Safety to at least Certificate 2 standard;
- An approved\* course in defensive driving techniques, if they will be transporting other group members or volunteers.

*\*Approved by the MLI Management Committee*

#### 2.1.2 Technical Skills and Competence

MLi office bearers must maintain a sound understanding of the practical tasks completed, the risks associated and how these are managed. Office bearers also need to be satisfied that MLI Project Coordinators have the necessary skills and competence to complete their assigned duties safely and to a satisfactory standard. This consideration should be part of the risk assessment process that commences prior to project commencement.

Where any doubt exists, MLI should assess, or arrange an assessment of, the level of competence and arrange further training or practice as necessary. In particular, attention needs to be paid to:

- Vehicle operation
- Work in remote locations, and
- The training and instruction of others.

## 2.2 SAFETY MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Every MLI member and volunteer has a responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a safe working environment.

**MLi office bearers** – The Board of Management has the responsibility of setting safety policy and procedures to provide a ‘duty of care’ of all participants of any activity conducted by MLI.

**Project Coordinators/Team Leaders** – typically responsible for the planning and delivery of practical projects, associated safety processes and the onsite supervision of all workers.

**Group participants** should be encouraged to:

- Declare pre-existing injuries or medical conditions that may affect their participation;
- Cooperate with the Group in the creation and maintenance of safe work places (including through the adherence to policies and procedures); and
- Report any unsafe situation or practice to the Project Coordinator.

## 2.3 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND WORK SYSTEMS

MLi has a duty of care to protect employees and volunteers from work place hazards including harmful UV radiation, and insect, spider and snakebites.

All workers should be encouraged to wear appropriate clothing based on the project tasks. MLI must also ensure that any specialised pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are

provided to workers where these are identified in the risk assessment. This PPE must be in good working condition and instruction provided on its use.

## 2.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

### 2.4.1 Risk Assessment Process

A risk assessment process should be undertaken prior to work commencing on any project. Hazards must be pointed out to all members and all risk control measures explained and documented on the Project Risk Assessment Form. A risk assessment process should be completed for every new project or for every change in the nature of the project being undertaken or proposed.

Risk management strategies should be expressed in terms of the actions that will be taken to manage the risks. Comments like “awareness” and “be careful” do not describe adequate risk control strategies.

### 2.4.2 Conducting a Risk Assessment

As an organiser or facilitator of an activity in which you encourage other people to participate, you owe those people a ‘duty of care’. The expectation is that you will take **reasonably practicable** steps to protect them against **reasonably foreseeable** accident or injury.

The following steps summarise a simple risk assessment process (the questions are examples and not an exhaustive list).

- 1) **Consider the Site:** Is it rough, steep, rocky, slippery, dusty, exposed to sun or wind? Is it thickly vegetated? Are there overhanging dead branches? Are there likely to be snakes, bees, wasps, bull ants or spiders? How far are you from emergency assistance if required?
- 2) **How could a person be injured?** Consider trips and falls, bites and stings, sunburn and dehydration, or eye injuries caused by twigs or spikes.
- 3) **Identify risk control strategies:** What will people do, or not do, in order to minimise the chance of harm? Involve everyone in the process; utilise all the eyes and experience the group can offer. Record the agreed strategies on the Risk Assessment Form. Make sure everyone understands what is expected of them.
- 4) **Supervise and monitor** to make sure everyone is sticking to the ‘rules’. Be prepared to change any strategies that don’t seem to be working.
- 5) **Complete the Risk Assessment Form**
- 6) **Emergency response plan:** Make sure you have emergency contact numbers, and ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. Complete the Emergency Response Plan Form.

### 2.4.3 Assessing the Level of Risk

An important part of formulating risk control strategies is understanding the level of risk remaining once these are in place. It is necessary to determine if the risks are acceptable and if the activity can proceed. The assessment of level of risk can also be used to prioritise those risks that require closer management than others.

This is done using a standard risk matrix to provide a ‘Risk Rating’. The risk matrix uses two measures to determine the level of risk:

**Likelihood** – how likely is it that a person will be injured by the risk?

**Consequence** – if an injury occurs what would the likely consequences be?

The following descriptors are a guide in determining these two measures.

### Likelihood

Descriptor	Outcome Description
Highly unlikely / rare	Remote possibility (less than once every 5+ years)
Unlikely	Not expected to occur (may occur every 1-5 years)
Quite possible	Occurs occasionally (monthly – yearly)
Likely	Occurs regularly (weekly – monthly)
Almost certain	Expected to occur (daily – weekly)

### Consequence

Descriptor	Outcome Description
Insignificant	No injuries
Minor	On-site first aid treatment
Moderate	Medical treatment required, loss of time
Major	Serious injury, hospitalisation
Catastrophic	Death, permanent disability

The level of risk is then simply obtained by using the following table. This is done by cross referencing the likelihood and consequence that has been determined for each risk. For example, a risk that has a likelihood of ‘unlikely’ and a consequence of ‘moderate’ will be a Medium level of risk.

Likelihood	Consequence					
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic	
Highly unlikely	L	L	L	M	H	
Unlikely	L	M	M	H	H	
Quite possible	L	M	H	H	E	
Likely	M	H	H	E	E	
Almost certain	M	H	E	E	E	

Having determined the level of risk, you are then guided to a level of response as shown below.

E = Extreme risk – **Do not proceed**

H = High risk – Requires consultation with the MLI Board of Management

M = Moderate risk – Project Coordinators with less than 3 months’ experience must consult with the MLI Board of Management

L = Low risk – Standard onsite risk management

Once hazards are identified, the following risk control strategies should be considered in sequence:

Hierarchy of Control	Examples of Control Measures
Elimination	Enable volunteers to drive, or be transported, to a site rather than walking any distance over rough ground
Substitution	Replace hand tools with power tools to reduce the level of force required to complete a task
Isolation	Put a barrier between the hazard and people
Engineering	Use mechanical lifting aids
Administrative	Rotate workers between different tasks
Personal protective equipment	Use sunscreen to protect volunteers from sunburn

The first action in controlling a risk should always be to eliminate the risk, i.e. plan to implement control measures that remove the possibility of the risk occurring. If this is not possible then plan to minimise the likelihood of the risk occurring as well as the level of consequence should the risk occur according to the sequence in the table.

Consideration in regard to PPE should extend beyond the obvious hats, sunglasses and sunscreen, and might include gaiters in snake habitat or mosquito nets where there are high numbers of insects.

#### 2.4.4 Unacceptable Risk

Where the risk assessment process leaves the Committee or Project Coordinator in any doubt that the project can proceed safely, they should suspend work on the project, or that component which is the source of concern, until such time as the risk can be satisfactorily controlled. At no time should the achievement of work outcomes be allowed to compromise safety.

#### 2.4.5 Adding Extra Risks and Risk Control Strategies

When a new risk is identified, appropriate control strategies must be determined and a new cell on the Risk Assessment Form must be completed and dated. In this way the project risk assessment can just continue to grow as a project proceeds.

**Different task** – same site: Just add any risks associated with the new task.

**Different site** – same task: Add locational risks in additional cells. Also complete the location reference points and emergency contacts with the dates applicable.

#### 2.4.6 Project Site Reference Points

Precise location reference points are necessary so that emergency services can be provided with accurate and concise directions to the project site. *It must always be remembered that the Project Coordinator might not be in a position to speak with emergency services and another person may have to provide direction.*

#### 2.4.7 Emergency Contact Details

While the '000' emergency number should be the first number called, this should be backed up by the local emergency service numbers and the '112' emergency number for mobile phones. A completed 'Emergency Response Plan' form has additional emergency contact details.

### 2.5 CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

#### 2.5.1 Health and Safety Representatives

MLi should establish a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) for the purpose of reviewing safety performance, disseminating safety information, and assisting in addressing and representing workers on safety issues raised by workers.

#### 2.5.2 Safety Meetings

Safety should be included as a standing agenda item at management committee or board meetings to discuss safety management, performance and incidents.

Consultative arrangements should be established to allow safety information and issues to be communicated. This may include newsletters, email or the MLi website.

## 2.6 PROJECTS REQUIRING HIGHER LEVEL RISK MANAGEMENT

### 2.6.1 Justification for Higher Risk Projects

If MLI is to voluntarily undertake a project that involves a higher than normal level of risk, there should be sound reason for doing so, and only then, if the extra risk can be satisfactorily managed.

Factors that would cause a project to fall into this category include:

- Remote location and/or travel.
- Reasonable possibility of extreme climatic and associated conditions, e.g. flood, extreme heat, bush fire.
- Any risk that requires the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) that would not normally be available on project sites.

All activities undertaken on projects need to be approved by the MLI Board of Management prior to commencement.

## 2.7 EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

Every project site is required to have an emergency response and evacuation plan that is communicated to all persons at that site. Consideration must be given to reasonably foreseeable emergencies so that appropriate response plans are developed. The plan needs to identify strategies for both getting assistance to the participants and evacuating them to a safer location.

### 2.7.1 Project Sites

A good Emergency Response includes:

- Reasonable access to two forms of communication (so far as is practicable).
- The position where the communication signal is strongest should be determined and then marked.
- Vehicles should be parked in a position where they are immediately available for evacuation and should have sufficient fuel to reach the nearest hospital or point of emergency assistance.
- The Project Coordinator must identify a suitable emergency signal such as a whistle or vehicle horn blast.
- Alternative escape routes need to be identified in recognition that the preferred route might not be safe or available, e.g. bushfire, flood.
- Concise unambiguous directions to the site (including, where appropriate, map references or references to readily identifiable landmarks) must be recorded on the Risk Assessment Form, where they are accessible to all participants.
- Any participants with first aid qualifications or experience should be identified so they can assist with the treatment of injuries, or in the communication with emergency services.
- Consideration must also be given to the possibility that the Project Coordinator may be incapacitated and unable to initiate or lead the emergency response.

At the first practicable opportunity, after participants have been made safe and emergency services alerted, the Project Coordinator should advise the MLI Chair who will take appropriate action.



## **2.7.2 Emergency Communication Protocols**

The purpose of communications should be to arrange assistance for the participants as quickly and effectively as possible so as to minimise harmful effects to individuals. It is essential that Project Coordinators have all necessary emergency contact details.

No member should offer, or be drawn into, any media comment in respect of an emergency, unless specifically authorised by the MLI Chair or nominee. All media inquiries should be directed to the MLI Chair.

## **2.7.3 Emergency Information**

Emergency services and the weather bureau have websites and apps that provide useful information in project planning and monitoring.

## **2.8 DISCLOSURE OF PRE-EXISTING INJURIES OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

The safety of a project site or activity cannot be assessed without consideration of the capacity of the persons involved.

### **2.8.1 Collecting Information**

During induction of volunteers, the Program Coordinator (or representative) needs to provide sufficient information regarding the inherent requirements of the activity to enable them to make an informed judgement about what conditions they ought to disclose.

The Program Coordinator must ask about any pre-existing injuries or medical conditions that may affect their capacity to participate in the activity.

Volunteers must complete a Volunteer Registration Form. If any condition is disclosed, an appropriate management plan must be developed and agreed as practicable by the volunteer.

Regular volunteers should be asked to renew their registration every twelve months, or sooner if their health or fitness status changes.

Any personal information disclosed to MLI must be treated in strict confidence and used only for the purpose of safely and discreetly managing the condition disclosed.

### **2.8.2 Requesting Further Medical Advice**

Where uncertainty exists regarding the suitability of an applicant to participate in a program, the Program Coordinator should require that person to obtain from their doctor a statement of their capacity or limitations.

### **2.8.3 Personal Management Plan**

No volunteer who has declared a pre-existing condition should be assigned to, or accepted on, a project or activity without first providing a management plan for the injury or medical condition that is acceptable to MLI. This must be in writing, and a copy must be provided to the Project Coordinator. MLI is then obliged to manage the volunteer in accordance with the plan; a course of action that best protects both the volunteer and MLI.

## 2.8.4 Emergency Action Plan

Where a pre-existing condition has potential to lead to an emergency, an Emergency Action Plan must also be provided by the volunteer and deemed acceptable to MLI. The emergency plan must also be documented and provided to the Project Coordinator.

## 2.9 BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Everyone is entitled to participate in an activity free from intimidation, ridicule and harassment and every person has a responsibility to maintain that environment. Bullying and harassment should be discussed at inductions. The clearer message is that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated. MLI should have the following in place:

- A contact person established to receive complaints. This can be the HSR if elected;
- A process established to resolve complaints respectfully, confidentially and fairly;
- Measures to provide everyone with information on what constitutes bullying and harassment.

## 2.10 LONE WORKERS

Working alone, particularly in a field based situation, increases the potential consequences of hazards due to the difficulty in obtaining emergency assistance and the potential for injury, illness or breakdown to go unnoticed for some time. The consequences can be potentially fatal if protocols are not established and followed in the management of risk and communication with the lone worker.

### 2.10.1 General Principles

A person is deemed to be working alone when they cannot be seen or heard by another person, and when they cannot expect a visit from another worker or member of the public for some time.

Lone worker principles:

- No worker should engage in isolated work if they have a medical condition that is deemed to be potentially life threatening.
- High risk activities must not be undertaken by lone workers.
- It is recommended that the lone worker have a current first aid qualification.
- Emergency contact numbers, e.g. spouse, must be known for the lone worker.
- Lone workers must be reminded of the need for compliance with the organisation's safety policy at all times.
- Ensure that the worker carries a personal first aid kit.

### 2.10.2 Preparation

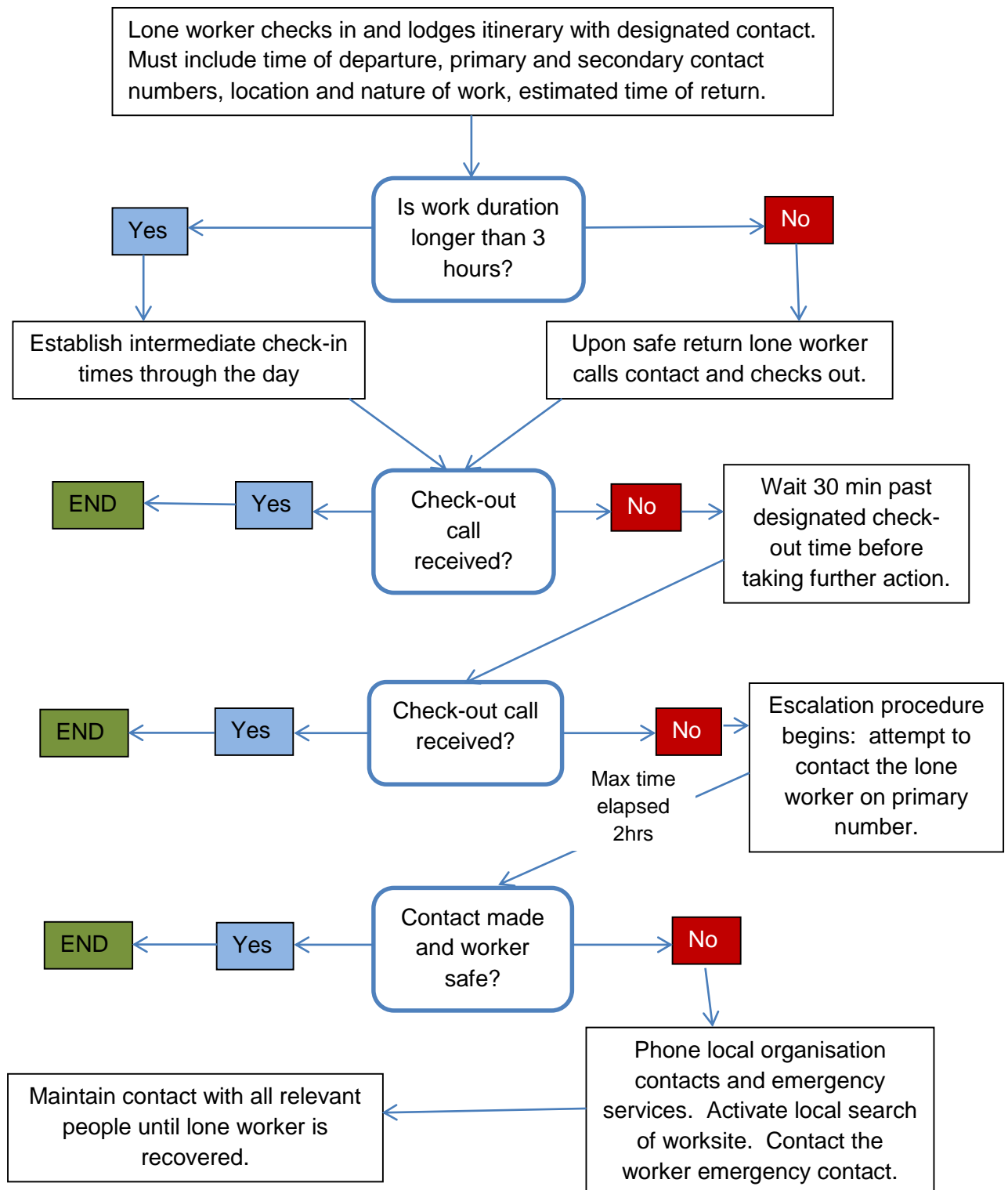
As far as is reasonably practicable, avoid requiring people to work alone. Where it is deemed necessary that a worker operates alone, appropriate risk assessment must be conducted considering:

- The length of time a person will be working alone.
- Expected or likely weather conditions.
- Communication, including implementation of the communication and escalation process detailed below.
- The competencies and experience of the person who will be working alone.

### 2.10.3 Communication and Escalation Process

A reliable method of communication (e.g. landline, mobile, satellite phone or two-way radio) must be carried at all times. This should be backed up by a secondary emergency device such as an EPIRB or a SPOT GPS Messenger.

Communication protocols and escalation process in the event a lone worker does not check in must be in place as shown in the diagram below. If there is specific reason to fear harm to the lone worker, (e.g. reports of fire or flood in the area) this timeframe should be reduced based on the perceived risk.



### **3. Work Site Safety**

#### **3.1 WORK SITE SAFETY**

##### **3.1.1 Smoking, Illegal Drugs and Alcohol**

Smoking of tobacco or the use or storage of alcohol or illegal drugs is not permitted within the confines of project sites, offices, accommodation or vehicles. At outdoor project sites, smoking may only occur during designated breaks and only where other persons will not be exposed to the risks of passive smoking. Smoking may not be permitted at all if the project involves school children, or if the Project Coordinator deems the fire risk to be unacceptable.

##### **3.1.2 Project Coordinator Responsibility**

The general safety and welfare of participants is the Project Coordinator's prime responsibility for the entire project duration. If, for any reason, the Project Coordinator must leave or divide the group, careful thought must be given to the most appropriate arrangement to ensure that supervision is maintained.

##### **3.1.3 Volunteer Mobile Phones, iPods, MP3 Players, etc.**

While undertaking the risk assessment, whenever safety instructions are being issued or whenever voice contact with the Project Coordinator is necessary, volunteers should be asked not to use mobile phones or other electronic devices that might distract their attention.

##### **3.1.4 Project Site Briefing**

A site and project briefing must be completed at the commencement of each project during which, at a minimum, the following should be communicated:

- Context and aims of the project.
- Tasks and duties.
- Risk assessment and project site safety.
- PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).
- Emergency procedures, first aid, communications and reporting.
- Toilets and hygiene facilities.

##### **3.1.5 Positive Work Site Behaviours**

Notwithstanding responsibilities detailed elsewhere in this policy, it is expected that Project Coordinators will demonstrate the following positive safety behaviours:

- a) On arrival, and regularly throughout the project, inspect the site for hazards.
- b) Ensure that a vehicle is on site and parked with an unobstructed exit. (This vehicle should also have a fire extinguisher compliant with state/territory guidelines.)
- c) Have escape routes planned.
- d) Ensure that the vehicle has sufficient fuel to reach the nearest hospital or doctor.
- e) Keep the project site tidy.
- f) Use fire responsibly, especially during high fire danger periods.
- g) Ensure that the first aid kit is accessible at all times.
- h) Intervene immediately when any dangerous practice is observed.
- i) Constantly reinforce the importance of safety and hygiene by personally modelling safe and healthy practices.
- j) Make a note of any accidents, incidents or recommendations that need to be brought to the attention of the Board of Management.

- k) Record any injuries sustained and first aid treatment administered in the Register of Injuries. More serious accidents must be reported on the Accident-Incident Investigation Report Form.

### 3.2 ROSS RIVER FEVER AND OTHER INSECT-BORNE DISEASES

Ensure that all program participants are frequently reminded of the need to take precautions to minimise the chance of infection. Among the steps to be taken are:

- a) Make people aware of the risk, particularly in relation to mosquito and tick bites.
- b) Monitor compliance with protective clothing policy (i.e. long trousers, long sleeves).
- c) Ensure that insect repellent is available (volunteers and staff should be encouraged to carry their own).
- d) Encourage the use of mosquito nets.
- e) Modify project practices to avoid locations or times of day when insects are more prevalent or active.

### 3.3 BUSHFIRE SAFETY

#### General Principles

- 1) No volunteers should be placed at risk or allowed to remain at risk during a bushfire or when there is a high fire danger. Completing a project is never a higher priority than the safety of volunteers.
- 2) Volunteers are generally not trained to fight bushfires. Procedures are therefore aimed at removing volunteers from contact with bushfires.
- 3) Groups undertaking activities in at risk areas must have two means of communication available to them, e.g. phone and radio, or phone and EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), etc.
- 4) Pre bushfire season preparation is essential.

It is essential that the possibility of bushfire is a prominent aspect of all project planning and risk assessments. In particular, the following questions need to be considered:

- How great is the threat of fire? Consider the project area, the weather forecast, fire danger period for your region, etc.
- Are there escape routes? Is the Project Coordinator clear on these? Fires are unpredictable and often change direction.
- Are emergency communications available?
- Does the Project Coordinator regularly monitor radio news reports and have the Bushfire Information Line number available?
- Have the issues of bushfire threat and emergency evacuation been discussed with the landholder and other project stakeholders?
- Are the Project Coordinator and volunteers acting responsibly regarding the use of fire while at project sites? This extends to the safe extinguishing of cigarette butts.
- Are the above issues highlighted in safety talks to project participants?
- Do vehicles have sufficient fuel to enable participants to evacuate an area safely?

### 3.3.1 Periods of High Fire Danger

A National Bushfire Danger Rating system was adopted in 2009. During the bushfire season the ratings are broadcast to warn of the level of danger so appropriate actions can be taken.

Fire Danger Rating	Recommended Action
CODE RED (CATASTROPHIC)	If you live in a bushfire prone area the safest option is to leave the night before, or early in the morning.
EXTREME	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared, well-constructed and you can actively defend it.
SEVERE	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.
VERY HIGH	If you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave, the safest option is to leave at the beginning of the day.
HIGH	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan.
LOW-MODERATE	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Based on the recommended actions associated with the ratings, the following should apply to project work:

- Stand down or cancel project activities on days of Catastrophic (code red) Fire Danger.
- Do not walk in forest, bushland, grassland or other high fire danger areas on days of Severe or Extreme Fire Danger. Activities in urban or residential areas may be acceptable based on the normal risk assessment process.
- Limit distances walked from the vehicle in high fire danger areas (e.g. bushland) on days of Very High, or greater Fire Danger.
- Identify and record the 'place of last resort' for each project site.

Project Coordinators are to be aware that finishing the project is never a higher priority than the safety of people. Project Coordinators must be prepared to withdraw people (or not send them) from project sites when the appropriate Fire Danger Rating thresholds are reached.

### 3.3.2 Preparation for the Bushfire Season

- 1) Identify the most reliable radio station that will provide local bushfire warnings and reports. Ensure this is prominently displayed for volunteers to see.
- 2) Add to your www favourites, web sites that provide daily weather information.
- 3) Download Fire Emergency Services APPS.
- 4) Ensure review of local emergency response procedures.
- 5) Brief or train staff to understand that during the bushfire season the possibility of a bushfire must be included in every project site risk assessment. An appropriate evacuation plan should be developed and communicated to all participants.
- 6) Ensure that all staff or project coordinators are familiar with (and understand) the emergency response and communication procedures.
- 7) Ensure that vehicle exhaust systems and mufflers are checked and in good order so that they do not pose a fire risk when travelling through dry grass or scrub.

### 3.3.3 General Procedures during the Bushfire Season

- Ensure that bushfire risk is discussed with project participants, and the outcomes of discussion are communicated to Project Coordinators. Access to and egress from a project site must also be considered.
- Monitor daily news and Emergency Service reports and note Fire Danger Ratings for the region.
- Advise Project Coordinators when there is a bushfire alert and who may be affected.
- Project Coordinators should ensure that MLI knows their daily project site location.
- Ensure there is a mechanism for making immediate contact with volunteers.
- Include 'bushfire' on the project risk assessment for all projects in forests, grasslands or heathlands.
- Recognise the major bushfire risk factors - high temperature, high winds, low humidity and abundant dry fuel.
- Assess the risk at any site by taking account of the weather forecast, the current Fire Danger Rating, and by observing the environment and considering escape route options. Encourage all volunteers to advise the Project Coordinator immediately anyone sees or smells smoke.
- Ensure vehicles have sufficient fuel to evacuate via the safest escape route.
- Check mufflers regularly, and remove dry grass from contact with the exhaust system every half hour when driving through long grass.
- Discuss an evacuation plan with, and ensure it is understood by, volunteers.
- Apply the cautionary principle – if in doubt about whether to withdraw from a project site, withdraw.

### 3.4 FOOD PREPARATION AND FOOD SAFETY

Whenever MLI staff are managing, preparing and supplying food it is important to adhere to correct food handling techniques to avoid food poisoning or gastric illnesses. It is important to ensure that participants have separate and clean utensils, water bottles, etc.

Where MLI staff are supplying food, it is their responsibility to ensure safe selection, storage and preparation. It is a requirement to ask participants if they have a dietary requirement or a food allergy.

#### 3.4.1 Food Purchasing

Prior to purchasing foods, the Project Coordinator must check if any participant has a food allergy. Food purchases should cater to meet adequate nutrition for participants with specific dietary requirements.

Minimise storage times and waste by avoiding over-buying of food. Be aware that 'specials' are often offered for food approaching its 'use-by' date.

#### 3.4.2 Food Storage and Preparation

The Group must ensure adequate facilities are provided for storage of food in transport and on site. Refrigeration must be provided for food to be kept for long periods. Ensure that suitable storage containers are provided. Project Coordinators should provide soap and washing water and encourage their usage prior to eating or preparing food.

Key points for food storage and preparation:

- Project Coordinators must check for any spoilt food.
- Check use-by dates and dispose of any suspicious produce.
- Keep chilled foods at 5°C or colder, and hot foods at 60°C or hotter.

- Avoid cross-contamination and dispose of any food affected by other products.
- Store raw meat below cooked meat.
- Partially used canned foods should be transferred to glass or plastic containers to avoid reaction with tin-plated metals.
- Thoroughly rinse all fruit and vegetables in clean water to remove soil, bacteria, insects and chemicals.
- Protect all foods (particularly raw meats) from flies and other pests.
- Chemicals must not be stored in food storage and preparation areas.
- Exclude from food preparation anyone showing symptoms of contagious viruses.
- Exclude animals from food preparation/eating areas.
- Provide non-latex rubber gloves for food preparation.
- Separate cutting boards are used for meat and other food.
- Avoid combining cooked and raw ingredients.
- Ensure that foods are thoroughly cooked.
- Ensure a cool water source is nearby to treat burns, especially if cooking over an open fire or barbeque.

The Project Coordinator must check the function of cooking equipment, e.g. gas bottles. A risk assessment needs to be completed with regards to food handling and preparation, including the use of equipment, e.g. gas BBQs. When cooking with a flame or electricity, a fire blanket is mandatory. A First Aid Kit is required in case of an emergency incident.

### **3.5 WORK SITE HYGIENE**

The provision of access to adequate work site hygiene facilities is critical in preserving the health and dignity of all participants. Such provision must also account for environmental impact issues.

It is the responsibility of the Group, when negotiating projects with landholders, to determine the strategies to be used in ensuring that the rights of participants in this regard are protected.

#### **3.5.1 Disease Control**

The sharing of drink bottles or cups must be avoided unless they have been properly washed between uses, and all volunteers and staff should have ready access to soap and water for frequent hand washing. Staff or volunteers suffering from colds or flu should be discouraged from travelling in vehicles with other people where there is an increased risk of spreading bacteria.

#### **3.5.2 Access to Toilets**

All project sites must have access to toilet facilities. This access can be provided by:

- 1) Fixed or portable toilets on site, or
- 2) The provision of a morning, lunchtime and afternoon trip for the group to toilet facilities.

All toilet facilities must have the accompanying requirements necessary for participants to adhere to hygienic toilet use practices in relation to washing and the appropriate disposal of waste products.

### **3.6 MANUAL HANDLING**



Manual handling refers to a wide range of activities including lifting, pushing, pulling, lowering, holding, carrying or restraining any object, animal or person.

### 3.6.1 On-Site Risk Assessment

At the project site risk assessment stage, deliberate strategies should be developed to eliminate or minimise:

- a) The lifting and lowering of loads;
- b) The need for bending, twisting and reaching movements; and
- c) Pushing, pulling, carrying and holding.

Consideration must also be given to the duration of the activities and the physical capacity (including pre-existing conditions) of those proposed to undertake them. The potential for finger or foot crush injuries must also be considered if heavy lifting is to be undertaken.

Risk management strategies include:

- Restructuring tasks to reduce the amount of manual handling;
- Carefully planning the project site layout;
- Explaining and demonstrating proper lifting techniques;
- Avoiding, or limiting the duration of, tasks that require the adoption of biomechanically unsound postures;
- Checking that equipment to be used is appropriate for the tasks to be undertaken and properly maintained.

### 3.7 EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS

It is reasonable to assume that participants will expect to experience some measure of discomfort attributable to climatic conditions. However, the standard risk assessment process must be enacted in order to ensure that risks are kept within the range of acceptability. The risk assessment process must take into account considerations such as:

- The expected duration of the extreme conditions;
- The quality of shelter and protective clothing available; and
- The proximity of accommodation relief.

Pre-existing injuries or medical conditions must also be taken into account. It must be recognised that individuals may react very differently to extreme conditions, so Project Coordinators must be mindful of the need to monitor and manage individual participants in these circumstances.

#### 3.7.1 Lightning – Electrical Storms

Risk of a lightning strike is managed in accordance with the '**30:30 rule**'; when the sound of thunder follows less than **30 seconds** after a visible lightning flash, people should seek immediate shelter inside a building or vehicle and remain there for at least **30 minutes** after the last lightning flash is seen. Research indicates that more than half of lightning deaths occur after a thunderstorm has passed.

During electrical activity the highest risk locations are open paddocks, open high ground, close proximity to the tallest structure in the area (e.g. tree, light pole), small structures such as picnic shelters, and swimming pools.

Land-line telephones should not be used during a thunder storm, and umbrellas should not be used for shelter.

#### 3.7.2 Pre-planning

During the project planning and development phase, Project Coordinators must consider the likelihood of extreme conditions, and ensure that so far as practicable:

- Alternative activities are negotiated,
- The Project Coordinator is adequately briefed,
- Pre-existing medical conditions of participants are considered, and
- The participants are appropriately resourced.

## **4. Motor Vehicle and Road Safety**

### **4.1 PROJECT COORDINATOR – DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **4.1.1 Road Safety and Vehicle Maintenance**

Transporting participants to and from project sites is the highest risk activity undertaken by a group. In order to maintain high safety standards:

- Vehicles must be driven in a manner that ensures all occupants are safe and feel safe. Vehicle occupants must advise the driver immediately if they feel unsafe.
- Seat belts, where fitted, must be worn by all occupants whenever a vehicle is in motion.
- Vehicles must be maintained in a safe and roadworthy condition.
- Drivers should have 'zero blood alcohol' when transporting participants.
- Project Coordinators should undertake a pre-departure vehicle check prior to departing to, and returning from, each activity.
- Drivers should maintain sufficient fuel to reach the nearest hospital/medical centre.
- Drivers must be appropriately licensed and competent to operate the vehicle being used.
- Passengers must not be transported in the open areas of the vehicle, e.g. ute tray.
- Drivers must comply with state road laws and vehicle seating capacity.
- Project Coordinators must not drive or authorise the use of vehicles they know to be unsafe.
- Drivers must not allow arms, heads or any objects to protrude from the vehicle.
- Drivers should minimise distractions, maintain ventilation and take regular breaks to optimise their comfort and concentration.

#### **4.1.2 Emergency Circumstances**

Project Coordinators are advised to identify an appropriately licensed person who can drive a vehicle in an emergency that renders the Project Coordinator incapable of driving safely.

### **4.2 VEHICLE ACCIDENT PROCEDURES**

#### **4.2.1 General Procedure**

If a Group vehicle is involved in a motor vehicle accident, the law requires that the driver takes the following action:

- a) Stop immediately.
- b) Give assistance to any injured person.
- c) Send for police and ambulance if anyone is injured.
- d) Give their name, address, vehicle registration number, and vehicle owner's name and address to the other parties.
- e) Remove all debris from the road, if safe to do so.
- f) Report the accident to the owner if there is only property damage.
- g) If anyone is injured, report the accident to the nearest police station or the Police Assistance Line on 131 444.

- h) Do not admit liability, as this may jeopardise the insurance cover.

#### **4.2.2 Motor Vehicle Accident Claim Forms**

A motor vehicle accident claim form must be obtained from the Insurance Company.

#### **4.3 Use of Mobile Phones in Vehicles**

There is evidence that even 'hands free' talking on the phone while driving can significantly increase the risk of accident. Phones should be turned off or not answered whilst vehicles are being driven in circumstances that demand the full attention of the driver, e.g. traffic, slippery conditions, etc.

Hand held mobile phones must not be used while driving.

### **5. First Aid**

#### **5.1 FIRST AID**

##### **5.1.1 Legal Obligation**

Work Health and Safety legislation requires the Group to make adequate provision for the welfare of project participants, an aspect of which is the provision of first aid in the event of injury or illness.

##### **5.1.2 Management of First Aid Kits**

Project Coordinators are responsible for managing their first aid kits, including:

- a) Checking contents of first aid kits on a regular basis.
- b) Ensuring that kits are loaded and accessible.
- c) Checking emergency contact numbers are included
- d) Checking hospital and phone locations are known.
- e) Identifying any volunteers with first aid qualifications.
- f) Ensuring that participants know the whereabouts of first aid kits.
- g) Ensuring the adequacy of first aid kits in relation to any known pre-existing medical conditions or injuries (notwithstanding the personal responsibility of participants to provide their own medications in accordance with their personal risk management plan).
- h) Maintaining a Register of Injuries.
- i) Restocking the kits after returning from projects.

##### **5.1.3 First Aid Kits in Management Vehicles**

Any vehicles used by employees of the Group are also workplaces and must also be equipped with suitable first aid kits. It is important that first aid kits are readily transportable.

##### **5.1.4 First Aid Training**

All Project Coordinators must ensure there is a designated first aid officer at each activity. The designated first aider should have evidence of a current Senior or Workplace Level 2 first aid qualification.

In general terms, first aiders should have the competencies necessary to enable them to render appropriate treatment for the types of injuries or illnesses reasonably foreseeable at their workplace.

## 6. Project Records and Reporting

### 6.1 PROJECT REPORT FORMS

Project Report Forms are legal documents that could be presented in court in the event of legal action that follows a project-related accident. Properly completed reports are important records of the people involved in an activity and any issues that arose.

#### 6.1.1 Project Coordinator Responsibility

Project Coordinators should complete these reports accurately with sufficient detail. As a general rule, it is better to record more information than is anticipated, and in a manner that reflects credit on the group.

- a) All injuries should be recorded in the Register of Injuries, even those that appear minor. This information is important to the process of reviewing and improving safety performance. All participants should have access to the Register and understand its purpose.
- b) Flippancy or sarcastic comments should not be recorded on Project Report Forms.

#### 6.1.2 Management Committee Responsibility

Management Committees should review the Reports to ensure their accuracy, and note any issues that require follow-up. Any action taken in relation to issues arising from the Report should be noted.

### 6.2 ACCIDENT-INCIDENT REPORTING

There are three levels of reporting documentation when an accident, injury or incident occurs.

#### 1) Register of Injury

Minor injury – requires access to the First Aid Kit, e.g. antiseptic and band aid for minor cut.

#### 2) Accident-Incident Report

Moderate to serious injury or incident – requires person to cease activity and to seek First Aid or medical treatment. A visit to hospital or a doctor is possibly required, e.g. laceration requiring stitches.

#### 3) Serious Incident Investigation Report

The accident/incident has clearly been serious enough for further investigation:

- a) To record more information to inform the injured person, authorities and insurer.
- b) For the Group to learn, review and potentially further develop safety policy, procedure and practices.

Additional advice:

- Record more information than you think is necessary.
- Information that is recorded at the time of an accident/incident is highly valued by insurers and the Courts.
- If the seriousness of an accident, injury or incident escalates then increase the level of reporting and record of the incident.

#### 6.2.1 Accident-Incident Investigation Report

An Accident/Incident Report must be completed when any of the following occur:

- An activity injury/illness requires professional medical attention, and/or renders the person incapable of working or carrying out their normal activities on the day following the injury.
- An incident causes property loss or damages.
- A 'near miss' has the potential to cause any of the above.

### **6.2.2 Reporting a 'Near Miss'**

A 'Near Miss' is an incident that has the potential to cause harm. When such an incident occurs an Accident/Incident Report needs to be completed and an investigation conducted.

### **6.2.3 Purpose**

- 1) To record information regarding serious incidents. This may be required for workers compensation or some other legal purpose. This information also enables the Group to analyse data for the purpose of identifying the need to amend policies or procedures.
- 2) To prompt and document the actions taken to prevent a recurrence of the incident reported. The purpose is not to assign blame but rather for the group to transition from being reactive to proactive, to prevent injury in the future.

### **6.2.4 Timeline**

A copy of the Accident-Incident Investigation Report form should reach the Management Committee chairperson within 48 hours of the incident. This is necessary so that the group can, if necessary, comply with workers compensation requirements.

### **6.2.5 Project Coordinator Reports**

The reporting of an accident/incident is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator. The First Aid Officer can assist the Project Coordinator. The injured person is not to complete any of the forms. The form must be completed promptly, accurately and completely.

### **6.2.6 The Investigation**

No injury is acceptable, so the Project Coordinator and Management Committee must each address three key questions in relation to any injury.

- 1) What could we have done to prevent this from occurring?
- 2) What could have been done to reduce the seriousness of the incident?
- 3) What will we do to prevent this from happening in the future?

These questions need to be considered by the people who sign the form:

- The injured person – consider personal responsibility, following directions, wearing PPE.
- The Project Coordinator – consider clearer direction, tighter supervision, etc.
- The Management Committee – consider improvement of staff or volunteer induction, policy review, advice on procedures, etc.

These people are encouraged to seek further assistance if they are unsure what they could have done differently.

## **7. Working with Schools**

### **7.1 WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED OF SCHOOLS**

It can reasonably be assumed that the school is in compliance with the guidelines relating to school excursions that are laid down by the Education Department.

In general terms these guidelines require that schools exercise their 'duty of care' by:

- Preparing students for the excursion; putting the excursion in a curriculum context and ensuring that students are appropriately dressed for the activities to be undertaken.
- Obtaining parental permission for students to participate in the activity.
- Staffing the excursion at a level that provides an appropriate staff-student supervision ratio.
- Taking responsibility for the general discipline and supervision of the students, including monitoring students with special needs and administering first aid.
- Providing an appropriate first aid kit. (The group must also have a first aid kit that is appropriate for the staff and volunteers involved.)
- Ensuring that students are accounted for during and after the excursion.

## 7.2 WHAT SCHOOLS CAN EXPECT OF MLI

Any joint activity involving MLI and school children is more likely to be successful when there is clear and timely communication between the parties involved; in simple terms, being clear about who is doing what.

Schools can reasonably expect MLI to assist this process by:

- Complying with State requirements in relation to police checks.
- Ensuring the school receives accurate information regarding the project objectives, the time and the location of the activity.
- Advising the school regarding any locational or activity related risks, including advice on appropriate clothing and footwear.
- Confirming that MLI's expectations (above) will be met.
- Ensuring that MLI staff and volunteers are neat and professional in appearance and conduct, engendering a sense of confidence and credibility. (Definitely no smoking within view of students, even during breaks.)
- Displaying good quality signage, as appropriate and available.
- Meeting the school on arrival, and providing a project and safety briefing based on a standard risk assessment. (This may need to involve separate briefings for teachers and students.)
- Ensuring that tools to be used are appropriate and in good condition.

### 7.2.1 Risk Management Strategies

- Do not allow MLI staff or volunteers to be alone with a school student or young person.
- Always try to arrange for MLI staff and volunteers to have access to a toilet that is not used by students.
- Ensure that personal belongings are not left in unsecured, unsupervised areas.
- Insist that a teacher remain present during all interactions with students.

## 8. Contractor and Consultant Management

It may at times be necessary for MLI to directly engage or work with external contractors and/or consultants. In such circumstances, the responsibility for safety is shared between the parties. That is, all partners have a duty to provide a safe workplace. To do this effectively, consultation and cooperation must be a key element of the project.

While the contractor/consultant has a responsibility to manage his safety, MLI must undertake some due diligence to ensure adequate measures are in place to manage risk. Along with the principles of consultation and coordination, MLI must undertake additional due diligence checks to ensure that:

- The contractor/consultant is appropriately qualified and experienced for the project;
- The contractor/consultant has current public liability insurance;
- The contractor/consultant has in place a current risk assessment or Job Safety Analysis (JSA) that adequately manages risk.
- Information is provided to the contractor/consultant on known hazards that should be considered as part of their work.
- An emergency response plan (at a minimum, first aid and communication) is in place, including a system of reporting to make MLI aware immediately of any incident or accident.

If a prospective contractor/consultant is unable to satisfy the above basic requirements, they should not be engaged for the project and an alternative provider sought.

## 9. Documentation

The following templates can be completed on a computer or printed for completion.

### Risk Management

- Project Risk Assessment Form
- Emergency Response Plan

### Recording and Reporting Accidents/Incidents

- Register of Injuries
- Accident/Incident Report
- Serious Incident Investigation Report