

## Fact sheet: *Safety tips for litter surveys and litter clean ups*

This fact sheet provides guidance to assist those undertaking litter surveys and litter clean ups to:

1. identify likely hazards and risks
2. identify actions for hazard mitigation and safety on site
3. outline emergency procedures.

As this document is a guide only, workplace health and safety procedures provided by the survey or clean up organiser should be abided by first and foremost. The Victorian Litter Action Alliance will not be liable for any incidents, accidents or injuries that may occur during litter surveys and/or clean ups.

### Likely hazards and risks

A hazard is anything that has the potential to harm the health or safety of a person. Hazards may arise from the workplace environment, the use of equipment and substances in the workplace, poor work designs, inappropriate management systems and procedures, and general human behaviour.

A risk is the likelihood of someone being exposed to a hazard. Risk is often measured as acceptable / unacceptable or as high, medium or low. Risk can be lessened by undertaking mitigation activities.

Likely hazards and risks which may be encountered when undertaking litter surveys and / or litter counts include:

- > cuts and abrasions
- > manual handling injuries – strains/muscular injuries, over exertion
- > slips, trips and falls
- > exposure to extreme or changing weather conditions
- > needle stick injury
- > exposure to hazardous materials
- > snake bites, insect bites or stings
- > encountering wildlife
- > other medical emergencies.

### Hazard and risk mitigation

To lessen the risk of being affected by the hazards outlined above the following actions can be undertaken:

1. **Prior to commencing** any work ensure the following:
  - Relevant permits / permissions to work on the site have been obtained
  - Relevant traffic management has been established if required
2. **Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** including the following:
  - Hat – preferably wide-brimmed
  - Gloves – heavy duty
  - Eye protection – sunglasses / safety glasses
  - Sturdy, flat, close toed shoes, steel-capped optional
  - Suitable clothing for the environmental conditions
  - High visibility safety vest, VicRoads approved if working on roadsides
3. **Ensure the following items are onsite and accessible:**
  - Water, both for drinking and hand washing
  - Hand wash / hand sanitiser
  - First-Aid kit
  - Sunscreen
  - Insect repellent
  - Sharps container
  - Charged mobile phone with reception
4. **Undertake a site assessment** prior to undertaking the litter survey / litter clean up to assess site conditions and identify potential hazards, such as slippery slopes, hazardous materials, drains etc.
5. **Have a designated First Aid officer**, usually the Site Supervisor.

**Should an incident requiring emergency response occur call “000” immediately.**

All incidents, injuries and near misses experienced by workers should be reported (whether an injury occurred or not) to the site supervisor as soon as practicably possible and recorded on the relevant incident/injury form.

Incidents may then be investigated to determine the cause and identify the associated risks in the workplace. Once the risks have been evaluated, risk control and management processes can be implemented to prevent future accidents.

6. **Have a plan for dealing with hazardous materials.** Hazardous material is any material that has the potential to harm the health or safety of a person. When conducting litter counts or litter clean ups you must always exercise caution in the case of uncovering hazardous materials.

If you believe an item to be hazardous the following procedure may be followed:

- a. Do NOT handle the hazardous material under any circumstance.
- b. Advise your site supervisor who may contact EPA Victoria on 1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842) for further instruction.
- c. Cease clean up until further advised.

7. **Have a plan for dealing with sharps / syringes.** If you come across a sharps ensure you follow your site supervisor’s instructions first and foremost.

In the absence of a plan the site supervisor and/or designated safety officer may follow this procedure:

- a. Put on disposable latex or vinyl gloves. Gloves will not prevent the wearer from being injured but will form a clean barrier between the hands and the syringe.
- b. Gather your sharps container.
- c. Ensure there is space to move and to clearly observe the syringe and your hands.
- d. Do not handle more than one item at a time. If there are multiple syringes, carefully separate them using a stick or implement – **do not** try to flick them or pick them up with a grabber/implement.
- e. Pick syringes up with the sharp end pointing away from you and place it needle side down into sharps container. Do not try to re-cap the sharp.
- f. Remove gloves carefully so any contaminated fluid on the glove does not come into contact with your hand and immediately wash your hands with running water and soap.
- g. Dispose of the sharps container safely.

If needle stick injury occurs:

- a. Stay calm
- b. Encourage the wound to bleed (gently squeeze)
- c. As soon as possible wash the area with running water and soap
- d. Apply an antiseptic and Band-Aid
- e. As soon as possible contact your site supervisor (relevant incident/injury form should be completed)
- f. It is important to be medically assessed as soon as possible. Visit your local doctor or hospital emergency department promptly; they will manage blood testing, counselling and possible hepatitis B and tetanus vaccination and/or medication.

8. **Ensure workers understand and abide by correct safe lifting techniques.** In particular, when moving / disposing of waste:
- a. Ensure correct carrying procedure of bending at the knees is used (figure 1).
  - b. Do not attempt to lift objects that are too heavy
  - c. Use tools and equipment in line with the manufacturer’s instructions



Figure 1 Correct safe lifting technique

Heavy or large items that cannot be safely handled are not to be removed.

9. **Other things to keep in mind:**

- a. **Garbage bags** – Litter placed in garbage bags is not to be squashed down, as workers may be injured by sharp objects.
- b. **Snakes / vermin** – Workers should be aware that they may come across snakes or vermin on the work site. Workers should not approach any snakes or vermin.
- c. **Alcohol and drugs** – Alcohol or drugs should not be consumed before entering or while on the work site.
- d. **Fire / extreme weather conditions** – always be aware of the weather and fire forecasts. Reschedule your litter survey or litter clean up if extreme conditions are predicted.

Fact Sheet – Safety tips for litter surveys and litter clean ups © Sustainability Victoria 2015

While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the contents of this publication are factually correct, Sustainability Victoria gives no warranty regarding its accuracy, completeness, currency or suitability for any particular purpose and to the extent permitted by law, does not accept any liability for loss or damages incurred as a result of reliance placed upon the content of this publication. This publication is provided on the basis that all persons accessing it undertake responsibility for assessing the relevance and accuracy of its content.

Fact Sheet – Safety tips for litter surveys and litter clean ups should be attributed to the Victorian Litter Action Alliance.

Fact Sheet – Safety tips for litter surveys and litter clean ups is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work and abide by the other licence terms. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>

