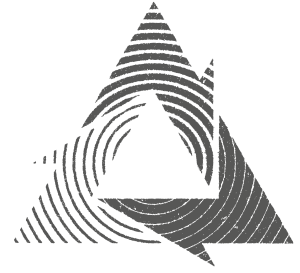


1

TRAINING MODULE 1

The Basics of Safe Working



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Contents

- Section 1—Health & Safety in general
- Section 2—Introduction to workplace risks
- Section 3—Safety in manual handling
- Section 4—Trainee exercises and questions

Safe working practice at a wood recycling enterprise

The community wood recycling enterprise at which you are working puts the welfare of all staff, volunteers and trainees at the very top of the priority list.

Because we take Health & Safety (H&S) very seriously, our enterprises have proven to be very safe places to work—with extremely low incident rates over more than 20 years. But before you carry out any work with us, we want you to be fully aware of the risks that you do face and how to remove or minimise them. We all strive to work in the safest way possible—for the safety and security of yourself and your colleagues.

To help ensure your safety and to help maximise your work experience, you will be given training in different aspects of community wood recycling and all such training will be recorded on your **Individual Training Log (ITL)**. The ITL is a document that clearly shows what tasks you have been instructed in—and therefore **what tasks you are permitted to do**. Please ensure that all the training you do is noted in your ITL.

The learning outcomes of module 1

After successfully completing this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the principles behind a good H&S system
- Understand your own responsibilities
- Understand the main risks to your Health & Safety
- Carry out a risk assessment
- Adopt working practises that will help you to stay safe

Section 1—Health & Safety in general

Wherever you work and whatever job you do, H&S laws are continually getting tougher. Many thousands of people every year are injured at work. Sometimes it is plain bad luck—a momentary loss of concentration, a slip or not looking where we are going. We have all been in situations like these and no matter how hard we try we can never take all the risk out of our lives.

But what is demanded by law is that **every** employer tries very hard to make sure that their staff (and the customers and other visitors to their premises) are never put at unnecessary and avoidable risk of injuring themselves.

The law makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the directors of each and every organisation to create an effective H&S system and to put it into practice.

The basis of controlling H&S in community wood recycling is a simple system that considers and identifies three main things:

- What are the potential risks?
- Who could be affected and how?
- How can the risks be removed or reduced to an acceptable level?

These questions are used to write a document known as a **Risk Assessment**—examples of which your trainer will show and discuss with you.

Risk Assessments (RAs) are documents that are written by **carefully examining** and **reflecting upon** all the possible risks to people in a place of work. They enable us to understand the possible risks and take steps to avoid them.

RAs are carried out for **places** (e.g. the office, shop, workshop) and **activities** (going on collections, using the chop saw or sander). Carrying out all the RAs that a community wood recycling enterprise needs is a time-consuming but very worthwhile process as it ensures that we comply with the law and fulfil our duty to keep staff, volunteers, customers, and visitors as safe as possible.

When writing a risk assessment, the possible dangers of an activity are considered and the risks noted down. Who is at risk (customers, tool user etc.) is also identified. Then careful thought is given to how the risk can be avoided, or at least minimised and what is being done to achieve this. It also pinpoints who is responsible for any further actions and sets a target date to carry them out.

▼ Sample layout of a Risk Assessment

What are the Hazards	Who might be harmed and how	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Falling timber	Bruises and blunt trauma and potential serious head injury to staff and customers	Wood is stacked properly and easy to extricate. Staff to offer assistance to customers in selecting wood. Condition of racking inspected regularly. Access excluded to damaged racking. Damaged racking repaired quickly. Signs in place warning about hazard of heavy/long wood.	Check racks every few hours to ensure wood is always safely stacked.	Any shop staff	Ongoing	
Trip hazards	Injury to staff and customers	Walkways are kept clear of timber and tools. Cables are routed away from walkways. The floor is kept dry and swept regularly. Staff immediately remove potential trip hazards (if left out by customers).				

To ensure that everyone in the workplace is kept as safe as possible, the risk assessments must go hand in hand with good **procedures**, effective **training** and regular **monitoring** and **updating**.

For example, when using a chop saw, good procedures must be put in place, like checking the tool for faults before using it and wearing the right personal protective equipment (PPE) every time it is used. Good training would include how to use the tool properly. As new tools are bought and new processes developed, the potential new risks that come along with them must be monitored and the risk assessments, procedures and training updated.

During your induction your Trainer will give you a risk assessment to read—make sure you understand how they are put together.

H&S responsibilities

As well as the enterprise itself, all workers (paid or voluntary) have a common set of H&S responsibilities that aim to help minimise risk.

From your first day, you are responsible for working safely at all times. This means:

- Following the instructions of your manager/supervisor
- Only doing what you are competent/trained to do
- Following the procedures that you will be trained in
- Alerting your supervisor to any ‘near misses’ or anything you feel is unsafe
- Never knowingly doing something that could be unsafe to you or anyone else
- Making sure that you know what to do in an emergency

General tips on working practices

Try to make good practise a habit.

- **Always follow the instructions of your supervisor.** You might be asked to do a task in a different (safer) way than you are used to. For example, many of us will use ladders at home unaided, but in the workplace it is forbidden to do so; there must always be someone holding the ladder for safety.
- **Always ask yourself “Am I competent to do this task?”** Do you really understand what you have to do? If you need advice or clarification never proceed until you have sought help and are sure.
- **Always be aware of who is around you when you are working;** could they be at risk from the work you are doing, or vice versa? For example, if you are moving long lengths of timber around, make sure that there is no one near you that you could accidentally hit. Likewise, if you are working in an area where others are moving such timber, make sure that they are aware of you.
- **Always plan your tasks;** have you got the right tools and PPE? Try to anticipate hitches or things that can make your work more difficult; accidents often happen when you encounter unanticipated difficulties.
- **Always keep your workplace tidy;** an untidy workplace significantly increases most hazards, so don’t leave things lying around the floor whilst working.
- **Let colleagues know what you are doing/where you’ll be;** this is important for managing tasks effectively.

What not to do when at work

- Never **drink alcohol** at work.
- Never **take drugs** (except approved medication) at work. Always inform your supervisor if you need to take prescribed medication and always follow any advice given (e.g. not to drive or use machinery).
- Never behave in a way that you know is **inappropriate, unprofessional** or **unsafe**.
- Never **use any tools** (especially power tools) that you have **not been trained and authorized** to use.

Protective clothing

The following protective clothing must be worn whenever you are working or volunteering at a community wood recycling enterprise, except in the office.

- **Boots** with steel toe caps and steel sole inserts to protect against drops or standing on nails.
- **Work gloves** to provide protection from splinters and rough edges when carrying wood.

You will be trained to use various tools and equipment and the required PPE will be provided for each. Other protective equipment you might use include dust masks, protective eye wear, ear defenders, hard hats and high-visibility clothing.

Section 2—Introduction to workplace risks

The following are the main areas of risk to H&S that we face in carrying out our duties at a community wood recycling enterprise.

Manual handling

Much of the work you will be doing involves the lifting and carrying of heavy or cumbersome items. Injuries caused by manual handling are the most common cause of workplace injury and so great care must be taken when lifting. Section 3 (below) provides some training in how to lift and carry safely.

There is no *specific* legal maximum weight that workers are allowed to handle but workers should never attempt to lift more than they feel comfortable with. Instead, the emphasis is on making a suitable and sufficient assessment of the load and how best to handle it in order to reduce the risk of injury. The most common form of work injury is lower back strain—which is usually the result of poor manual handling technique.

In addition, particular care shall be taken to be aware of nails, splinters and other protrusions from wood when it is handled or being processed.

Working with hand and power tools

As part of your work with the enterprise you might have the opportunity to learn how to use both hand and power tools. You should never use any tool without first being trained how to use it (and the training must be recorded in your ITL).

Always use the right tool for the right job in the right way.

As well as injury from the tool itself, noise and dust are also significant risks to health, so always wear the correct (properly fitted) PPE. Training modules 3, 4 and 5 provide more training on the risks around the use of tools.

Remember, using power tools incorrectly can result in severe injury or death. Only ever use equipment that you have been trained to use.

Loading and unloading vehicles

Loading or unloading vehicles presents a real risk to health. Things might slide, slip or fall off during the loading or unloading process so great care should be taken. If loading or unloading on any public highway, on any building site or at any place where there is the potential for other vehicles to be operating, workers must wear high visibility clothing and particular care should be taken to park in the safest possible place. The safety of other road users and passers-by must also always be considered.

As a general rule, always load a vehicle through the cage doors, do not throw material over the cage sides—it could miss or bounce causing injury. Load the vehicle evenly, making sure that there is as little void (unfilled gaps) as possible. Avoid standing on the back of the vehicle unless there is an edge protection chain in place.

Also, always ensure the load is properly secured and that no part of the load is too high, or unbalanced. Never let the vehicle move off until someone has confirmed to the driver that the cage doors are properly shut and the load is properly secured.

Storage and stacking of items

For displaying in our retail areas wood is generally stacked upright and could topple over if not placed with care. Make sure that any stacks of wood are properly contained within their bays, are stable, and not likely to slip, shift or fall. Take special care when stacking wood in public areas; could the way it is stacked be a danger to others?

And make sure that when carrying wood that you don't endanger anyone nearby, so always be aware of the length of the piece you are carrying; we don't want any "Laurel and Hardy" moments! Again, remember that recycled wood can contain protruding nails, screws or have sharp splinters, so check for these before lifting—and make sure you have your gloves on.

Fire

With so much wood around our premises there is a low but constant risk of fire. Make sure that you know where the fire exits and assembly points are. In the event of a fire, do not attempt to use the fire extinguishers unless you have been trained to use them.

Evacuate the building immediately and go to the assembly point. In compliance with the law, smoking is forbidden in any part of the premises.

Working on building sites and at waste transfer stations

Significant risk exists when working on building sites and at waste transfer stations/wood recycling yards, and all those visiting such places must have completed the appropriate training (Training Module 2) and have it recorded

in their ITL. In addition, each site will have its own safety rules, which should be strictly adhered to. High visibility clothing, protective boots, gloves, hard hats and eye protection must be worn at all times and on many sites, masks and ear defenders might be required too. Always keep eyes and ears open for hazards.

Section 3—Safety in Manual Handling

It is inevitable that we will have to lift and shift quite heavy pieces of timber, sheet materials and other items. If we learn to lift in the best way possible, the risk of injury can be greatly minimized.

Hazards in lifting and carrying

Lifting even a small weight can cause a strain injury if you do it wrong. So it is really important to get into the right habits when lifting and carrying, including:

- **Assessing the weight** before lifting, as an unexpected weight can throw you off balance or strain you.
- **Using tools** and mechanical aids when appropriate, but only those you have been trained to use.
- **Dropping the object** you are carrying is dangerous; it can bounce back up and hit you, sometimes with great force. If you trip or have a poor grip, a load can hit your feet or legs as it falls.
- **Wet, slippery or unwieldy loads** can accidentally slip or twist in your grip. You are much more likely to drop a slippery or unwieldy object or strain yourself.
- **Partially obstructed walkways** are always a hazard when carrying a load. In addition to the risk of tripping, obstructions are a serious hazard because they force you to twist yourself around or step up and over things when you are carrying something. This makes strain injuries much more likely.
- **Narrow points** like doorways are often where knocks and injuries to your hands occur so be very careful as you carry a load through.
- **Slippery walkways** are always dangerous. If you slip over when carrying you can be seriously hurt. Always keep your balance, don't overreach. Go at a pace that you can handle. Avoid wet areas if possible.
- **Splinters and cuts** are almost inevitable when handling timber, so make sure you always wear safety gloves. The materials we handle contain nails and are full of splinters. There is also a risk that fragments of glass or stones may stick to things you pick up and may cut you.
- **The wind** can create a very serious hazard; even a gentle gust of wind can catch a load and blow it (and you) around, causing strain injuries, or sending you into collision with another object, person or moving vehicle. Always get help if moving large sheet materials around outside.
- **Pedestrians and vehicles** can hit you or be hit by you when you are carrying a load. Take steps to reduce this by planning your route and by getting help.

Basics of safe lifting and carrying

- Always plan your action: before you lift something you should plan how you will lift it, where you will take it and how you will get there. This must become a habit for you every time. You must think about the hazards listed above and work out how they will affect your action on each occasion. Bad planning is the major cause

of manual handling accidents.

- Safety equipment: use the right equipment. Have you got your gloves on? Are you wearing your safety boots?
- Decide whether you can safely handle the load on your own: don't attempt to lift too much weight. Look at the load, size it up; lift a side to test the weight and the balance. If it's too big, too heavy or too unbalanced, then get help. Never try to be a hero; always get help if you are in doubt about a load.
- Check and clear your route: you must do this before you pick up a load. Once you are carrying something it might be difficult to clear a path for yourself or pick a safer route when you find an obstruction. A difficult route means you can carry less and increases the risk of injury. Once you have checked your route you might realise that you need to share the load. Hazards include uneven/slippery walkways, narrow places, corners, steps, wind traps.

Planning where and how to put down your load

The trickiest part of moving a load is often when you pick it up and put it down. This is when many strain injuries happen. So you must check and plan your route **before** you pick it up. If you are putting it in the van, make sure the doors are open **before** you lift; if it is going on to a stack or in a bay, make sure there is space **before** you lift. If you plan properly, you will only have to pick it up once and put it down once.

How to lift safely

- Find the balance of the object before taking the full weight.
- Take time to get a firm and comfortable grip on the item and make sure the weight is balanced.
- Bend your knees and keep your back as straight as possible. The weight should be taken by the legs not the back.
- Lift smoothly. Avoid twisting motions during lifting and when carrying. The nearer the weight to your body, the easier it will be to carry—and the less the strain on your back and arms.

How to lift and carry in a team

Planning is even more important when you are lifting with other people. You do not want to debate what to do or where you are taking the load, once you have picked it up. Make sure the plan is fully understood and agreed before you lift. Firstly, work out by carefully trying to feel the weight of the load, how many people should help.

Sometimes, too many people on a lift can become a hazard as they get in each other's way. Signs that there are too many people carrying a load include: some not having a proper grip on the load; people are tripping each other up; the load is becoming unbalanced (common when a third person helps with a two-person load).

Communication and eye contact is essential as you move the load. You need to tell each other about any hazards as they arise, so call out warnings; for example 'mind the step', 'there is a low beam coming up', 'mind your head'.

If an extra person wants to help, ask them to wait for instructions, for example, they might be needed to take some of the weight when the load is being set down. They could also check the route and alert people that you are coming past.

How to get better (and safer) at manual handling

The way that feels most comfortable is usually the safest way to carry a load. Experienced people usually develop the habit of lifting something in the easiest safest way. Watch more experienced colleagues and learn from them and pass on the right techniques to others.

Where to get more information

Do not hesitate to ask your manager, your trainer or any other member of staff for help on any aspect of Health & Safety.

Module 1: Exercise 1

1. Who is responsible by law for an organisation's H&S system?	
2. What are the 3 main things considered by our H&S system?	
3. Why must written risk assessments be carried out?	
4. What is the purpose of the individual training log?	
5. List 3 responsibilities you have in relation to H&S?	
6. What do you do if you feel anything is unsafe or experience any incidents that could affect H&S?	
7. What should you do in the event of a fire?	
8. How can an untidy workplace affect H&S?	
9. What 2 items of PPE should always be worn?	
10. How much alcohol are you permitted to drink whilst working at a wood recycling enterprise?	

11. What is the only equipment you should use when at work?	
12. What is the most common form of work injury?	
13. What is this usually due to?	
14. What is the best way of protecting yourself from injury?	
15. When should you use a fire extinguisher?	
16. Where inside a building is smoking permitted?	
17. How can you best avoid cuts and splinters on your hands?	
18. What maximum weight are workers allowed to lift alone?	
19. Why is the wind a potential hazard when moving timber?	
20. When should high-viz clothing be worn?	
21. What should you do before lifting a potentially heavy load?	
22. What should you do before lifting a load as a team?	
23. How many people should lift a load?	
24. Who should you ask for advice on H&S?	

Office use only		Number of correct answers required to pass Module 1: 18			
Passed:		Retake:		Date:	
Trainer's signature:					