

Waterway Recovery Group Canal Camps Health and Safety management

Volunteers have different motivations to employees and it is understanding this fact that leads to their safe management. While some risks are reduced others may be increased. Table 1 gives an analysis of the key differences between volunteer operations and conventional commercial concerns. In the light of this, and using its extensive experience, WRG has evolved a Health and Safety management regime that, we believe, satisfies HSG 65 and is the most appropriate model for our Canal Camp operation.

Structure

WRG is a charitable operation. It is the “operational” subsidiary of The Inland Waterways Association, a registered charity.

- IWA provides the H & S policy
- WRG ensures adequate resources and provides the implementation

WRG has a Board of Directors responsible for the implementation of the H&S policy. The Board approve all projects and appoint leaders to carry them out. A significant majority of the Board has extensive experience of leading Canal Camps themselves, 20% of our 2007 camps were led by directors.

The Health and Safety section of the WRG Board meetings is widened out to a Committee comprising all active WRG organizers to ensure maximum involvement. Additionally regular articles in our magazine, prominence in our training programme and website and regular discussion in emails and letters between Board, Camp Leaders and volunteers mean that Health and Safety has the very highest profile. This commitment is proactively led by the Chairman.

Planning

Of particular concern is to ensure that the traditional construction pressures of finance and time are very much reduced or even removed. WRG projects do not have to make a profit and, although they do have targets and milestones, no Camp leader feels it will reflect badly on them if they are not achieved during their Camp.

At all levels volunteers are able to make independent decisions based solely on Health and Safety considerations. This means that responsibility can be shared effectively amongst all workers (as required by HSW Act) rather than H and S being seen as “someone else’s” responsibility.

This removes many of the risks that normal commercial concerns face and allows us to concentrate on the more significant risks that exist with volunteers – normally lack of experience. This is mainly tackled by careful attention to appropriate levels of induction, documentation, supervision, training and review.

Where we do enter an agreement where these pressures may be present (for example a s106 agreement that has deadlines or where the local society will be responsible for the H&S management) additional supervision is used. This is usually by appointing a Director who has no link to the project to review the planning and ensure that the risks from these pressures have not affected the safety management. The Director is free to contact and use external resources.

Additionally WRG do not “own” any projects or worksites – therefore all our safety planning needs to be “signed off” by the third party responsible (Navigation Authority, restoration society, etc). While not absolving us of our responsibilities it does provide a degree of external assessment on all our projects.

Delivery – Camp Leaders

To ensure any new project is adequately supported it is inspected by a team of experienced WRG volunteers who have experience of the type of work proposed. These, and other experienced volunteers, are available during the planning and implementation of the project.

A Canal Camp leader is appointed by the Board based on their knowledge and previous experience of the work and the site. They are given the full backing of the Board for any decisions/actions they take on the ground. Where the project spans several Canal Camps then an overall leader is appointed to ensure that appropriate communication occurs between leaders and “joined up” management is in place. A “duty Director” is also appointed for every Camp. This is an additional resource for a leader to use should they feel unable to make an independent decision regarding any aspect of the camp, particularly Health and Safety. This “duty Director” has no link with the camp and so is able to give independent advice.

Canal Camp leaders are given a hard copy of the Leader Guidance Notes (LGN), this makes clear their place in the safety management structure. They are also given a current copy of the WRG Health and Safety Resource CD. This contains all the resources to ensure that they can plan their Canal Camp. At any point they can refer questions to experienced volunteers.

Delivery - Volunteers

The Canal Camps brochure and WRG website gives initial details of their responsibilities with regard to Health and Safety. When they book they are sent the Volunteers' Health and Safety Guide (the Green Book), this gives basic advice on roles, responsibilities and best practice for on-site safety.

When the volunteer arrives on the Canal Camp they will be given a Health and Safety induction before going on site. (Wherever possible the talk will include a showing of the WRG Health and Safety video). This will reinforce general site

procedures and provide specific details as to the site and project they will be working on.

The induction will also introduce the additional documentation relevant to that site; this may be simple "job sheets" or a full Safe System of Work and accompanying Risk Assessment as appropriate. Other H & S documents such as the "incident report form" are introduced. It is made clear to volunteers that they have a responsibility and a part to play in the Health and Safety of the Camp and they are encouraged to play this part.

The volunteer will be asked to sign that they have received this induction and that they are willing to follow the leaders directions at all times, this form is returned to WRG Head Office and kept on record. All relevant documentation (including a copy of the Practical Restoration Handbook) is kept in a flight case and taken on site every day. Volunteers are encouraged to consult this documentation.

Leaders will ensure that volunteers are given sufficient instruction and supervision to enable them to undertake any tasks they are asked to do. Regular "Toolbox Talks" ensure that Health and Safety and the correct way to do a job is kept on everyone's mind.

Monitoring, review and feedback

We also undertake monitoring, review and feedback. An experienced volunteer (usually a Director) will visit a Camp and their impressions will be fed back to the Board. All Canal Camp volunteers receive an anonymous feedback survey that always includes questions on H&S. This gives direct feedback from the volunteers perspective and it provides a valuable insight into our performance. This survey has a high return rate and is reviewed annually by the Board.

There are two other forms of more informal monitoring – our magazine "Navvies" features reviews of all our Canal Camps and these are often written by first time volunteers. Additionally every Canal Camp has a digital camera, ostensibly these are to record construction and architectural details, but the combination of full and frank reports and candid photos give a good insight into general site discipline and possible bad practice. The use of Near Incident forms is also encouraged at all times.

All incidents reported or detected by any of the above routes are dealt with directly by the Board. They are discussed, recorded and any appropriate actions taken.

Monitoring of new developments in H&S is driven by our insurers (who give excellent strategic advice regarding risk management), our 2000 subscribers (who encounter H&S legislation from their many diverse occupations), membership of ROSPA and NCVO and, increasingly, the excellent HSEalert email system.

Any new or revised H&S information is circulated via our magazine and direct mailings to affected parties. Additionally all WRG H & S documentation is available freely on the WRG web site: www.wrg.org.uk.

On behalf of the WRG Board September 2007.

Mike Palmer, Chairman.

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Table1. Analysis and mitigation of the principle risks of WRGs organisation.

Issue	Board	Camp Leader	Volunteer
<p><i>“Herald of Free Enterprise”</i> Commercial pressures mean that workers at all levels are unable to make correct, independent H & S decisions for fear of losing wages, employment, profits, penalties, etc. Associated with this is a lack of adequate resources (partic. time) and what seem to be rewards for cutting corners. This also results in feedback and employee “buy-in” being discouraged.</p>	<p>IWA has made it clear that they do not expect WRG to make a profit and will fund all its operations. Reserve funds totaling four times the annual total budget for WRG exist to draw upon. Directors have no financial links to activities.</p>	<p>Leader does not have to make a profit. Failing to achieve Camps desired outcome will be seen as a positive if for safety reasons. Camp leaders have no financial links to activities.</p>	<p>Volunteer can be (and are) fully engaged in the safety process without fear of wages being docked, bonuses being lost, etc. Volunteers naturally engage fully with the feedback process. This is encouraged at all times.</p>
<p><i>“Orkney/Duke of Edinburgh”</i> Ignorance of capabilities/limits and the desire to help out and do some good.</p>	<p>Considerable experience of volunteer activities/abilities and demonstrable record of prudent management.</p>	<p>Clear briefing as to the project scope with continual access to Board/experienced vols encouraged.</p>	<p>Limits are clearly outlined in their induction. WRG volunteers also have a clear motivation to do things correctly, hence they always ask. Volunteers have little or no experience of site work and so are naturally more wary. These three together with encouragement and regular Toolbox talks leads to effective management of this risk.</p>
<p><i>“Training”</i> Need to ensure adequately trained workforce given the possibility of a low skill-base.</p>		<p>The Board run a regular Camp Leaders development programme that always features H&S issues.</p>	<p>Volunteers may only be giving a small amount of time so training and induction must be appropriate and must not swamp the volunteer – WRG has considerable experience of</p>

			<p>appropriate inductions/documentation. Because volunteers are giving their time freely they wish to do things correctly and not waste their time. There is no reward in doing it wrong so they ask to be trained before attempting skills. Canal camps are a 24 hour training experience – informal training will continue when off site. This has proved to be a very effective method of improving competence and particularly reminding people of their responsibilities.</p>
<p><i>“Keenness”</i> The desire to get on and help out possibly before the planning is complete”</p>	<p>The Board regularly cautions against this in communications.</p>	<p>Camp Leaders are clearly briefed regarding the problems with this.</p>	<p>Clearly briefed during induction not to undertake any task unless requested to and fully instructed.</p>
<p><i>“Ignorance”</i> A lack of expert advice</p>	<p>Board encourages and takes heed of input from diverse sources - insurers, WRG members, BW, ROSPA, NCVO, NCA, SCA HSEalert. Additionally it has a role as co-ordinating body for all other (100!) restoration bodies and so receives a lot of input.</p>	<p>Camp Leaders have access to extensive website and resources CD.</p>	<p>Regular communications via Navvies magazine. Specific briefings to the particular project during the Camp induction.</p>