

Title: Working on or Over Water

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1. Introduction

This Code of Practice provides guidance for staff who are required to work on or over water.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act an employer has a duty to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of his employees. This Code of Practice is intended to provide a means of meeting that responsibility. However, where staff are not sure of the correct safety procedures and practices, further guidance should be sought from their line manager or the Health and Safety Advisor. All activities undertaken on, in or around watercourses or drainage features such as attenuation ponds should be subject to site specific risk assessments prior to any work proceeding. Staff must **never** engage in any work activity which they consider to be unsafe or poses unacceptable risks.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Practice, a competent person is defined as someone who has preferably received formal training, but otherwise has extensive experience in the use of specialist access and safety equipment and has an understanding of the risks involved in working on or over water and relevant Health and Safety requirements. With regard to boats a competent person is someone who has received formal training in and has experience in the use of the boat under all operating conditions likely to be encountered. In tidal waters this will include knowledge of the tide times, tidal range and flow of water around any structure to be inspected or worked upon.

Shallow water shall mean water, stationary or with low flows rates, being no deeper than 150mm at any time during works or inspection.

3. Hazards

Work on, in or over water, e.g. for bridge inspection work, carries particular risks from:-

- (i) Falls from height.
- (ii) Falls into cold or polluted water.
- (iii) Falls or being overcome by tidal and fast flowing water..
- (iv) Unsafe or insecure walkways
- (v) Trips and Slips from Low Level

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- (vi) Lack of rescuers and or rescue equipment
- (vii) Failure to take account of weather forecasts
- (viii) Diseases from contaminated water (e.g. leptospirosis)

4. General Requirements

Where scaffolding is used this shall comply with the relevant legislation and codes of practice. Staff shall ensure that any scaffold has been erected and inspected by a competent person and any issues raised as a result of inspection have been acted upon.

When using Mobile Elevated Working Platforms (MEWPs) proper consideration should be given to the recommended use of safety lines and or buoyancy aids based on the level of risks associated with falling from height and or drowning.

(see http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/ocs/300-399/314_20.htm)

The HSE recommends that only a lifejacket should be worn when working near water if there is a foreseeable risk that the either MEWP or the occupant could end up in the water.

Protective clothing and equipment, suitable for the tasks to be undertaken should be worn at all times. These may include items such as, safety helmets, waders, life jackets and harness and line, which shall be used where appropriate. (Refer to CPA5 for detailed safety clothing and equipment guidance) further guidance on the selection and use of appropriate personal buoyancy equipment can be found at. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais1.pdf> .

Life jackets and harnesses shall be inspected and checked at regular intervals, as recommended by the manufacturer.

First aid kits shall be available for work on site.

When planning inspections or short duration works, local weather forecasts should be taken in to account. On watercourses subject to known fluctuations in level due to conditions upstream, the prevailing weather and wider forecasts upstream of the works should also be considered.

Special care is needed if inspections are carried out during frosty or wet weather as this may make the banks and stones particularly slippery and hazardous.

5. Inspection Over Or In The Vicinity Of Water

Where inspections take place over or in close proximity to deep or fast flowing water, all personnel must wear approved life jackets and there should be a minimum of two people present. One of those present must be a competent person and the other person should have received sufficient training to enable him or her to carry out their duties safely and without endangering themselves or others.

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Where there is a risk of anyone falling from height, then harnesses and lanyards should be worn and attached to a suitable point.

6. Inspections Or Investigations Undertaken In Water

Inspections or investigations in shallow water shall be undertaken with care and a wading pole or other suitable implement used to check the river/stream bed for soft spots or scour holes. Such work may be carried out by a person working on their own, subject to them meeting the requirements of Corporate Guidance G23 and the local Risk Assessment and have about their person an appropriate lone working device.

If the depth of water necessitates the use of waders, the inspection must be carried out by two persons with one remaining on the bank. A lifeline should be fixed to a suitable fixture on the bank.

If someone falls into the water then the first requirement must always be to get the person out and to the nearest point where medical assistance is available as quickly as possible. If the rescue will endanger the safety of the other member of staff then outside help should be summoned or obtained if this is available locally.

This procedure shall be followed even if the person is only slightly hurt, and in all cases following immersion in cold polluted water.

7. Boats and Pontoons

Where any works or inspections are carried out from a boat or pontoon, all personnel shall wear life jackets at all times. A competent person shall always be present during this type of work.

A lifeline shall be fixed between the boat and the bank for unpowered boats and at least three people shall be present. Where no suitable fixings are available on the bank then the use of suitable temporary fixings shall be implemented. Where the boat cannot be attached to the bank then the inspection shall not take place.

Waders should not be worn when in the boat. They will cause serious difficulty in the event of falling overboard and may lead to drowning.

Inspections should not be carried out if visibility is poor.

Pontoons used as working platforms must be properly constructed and sufficiently stable to avoid tipping. Special attention should be paid to good anchorage and ballasting. Point loads near the edge should be avoided. Suitable and sufficient safe means of access and egress shall be provided.

Boats used to gain access should be in good condition and appropriate for the water conditions encountered and under the control of a competent person.

Inflatable dinghies should be checked prior to going out on the water to

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ensure that they have been inflated to the correct pressure and are free from leaks. Care must be taken to avoid possible damage from submerged objects.

Where works or inspections are required on tidal or fast flowing water, an engine powered boat shall be provided with a minimum of three oars, a boat hook, a bailer, grab lines, lifebuoy marine radio or mobile phone, a first aid kit and replacement warm clothing. Two people shall man the boat at all times, one of whom shall be a competent boatman with knowledge of tides etc where appropriate.

8. Fixed Walkways

At some locations e.g. Cross Keys swing bridge, permanent fixed walkways are provided for routine access, maintenance and inspection. In addition to the standard protective clothing, hard hat, gloves and hi. vis. clothing, an appropriate life jacket shall be worn at all times when using these walkways .

The condition of permanent walkways must be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that they are in good condition and free from corrosion or other significant defects. Attention should be given to the condition of hand rails, toe boards and in particular, tread plates and their associated fixings. The frequency of inspection will be commensurate with the level of use and degree of risk. The results of these inspections should be recorded and any defects found should be reported to the appropriate person for further investigation and action.

9. Construction Sites

A full risk assessment shall be carried out on all planned construction/maintenance sites on, over or adjacent to watercourses and large drainage features. No work shall be undertaken without an agreed method statement/safe system of work or a full construction phase health and safety plan being in place. If in doubt please seek the advice of the Health and Safety Advisors or other competent person.

10. Diseases and Illness

Diseases and illnesses can be contracted by contact with contaminated water and the surrounding areas at many sites; these include Tetanus (Lock Jaw) and leptospirosis (Weils Disease). It is imperative that staff working on or near water ensure that vaccinations are up-to-date and adhere to good hygiene practice, i.e.

- (i) Thoroughly wash and cleanse all exposed areas of skin after inspection and particularly before smoking, eating or drinking.
- (ii) Cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work.
- (ii) Cuts and abrasions which occur during the work must be thoroughly washed, cleaned and treated with antiseptic.

Information on leptospirosis and tetanus precautions is provided in Lincolnshire

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County Council's leaflet PO EL 17 which should be issued to all staff who are required to work on sites where they may come into contact with these diseases.

Care should also be taken as to the presence of discarded syringes.

Detailed advice on the common diseases likely to be encountered is given in Section G12 of the Health and Safety Manual.

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