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| <b>Title: Outdoor Work</b> |  |
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Further information is available in the [Corporate Health and Safety Manual](#)

Please search on LCC Connects for:

[POEL20B Skincare at Work](#), [POEL26 Bacterial and Viral Infections from Soil, Water or Animals](#), [POEL17 General Precautions](#)

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# PLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY MANUAL

## 1. Introduction

This Safety Code of Practice details some of the hazards and risks which may be encountered when working outdoors. As in all health and safety issues it is impossible to foresee all eventualities and staff must be alert to possible hazards at all times. It will often be the case that staff working outdoors will be engaged in activities which are the subject of other codes of practice (e.g. surveying, supervision of construction work) and these must also be consulted. Staff are expected to wear sensible and appropriate clothing to provide protection. Anyone in doubt should consult their manager.

## 2. Hazards

Some potential hazards when working outdoors are:-

- (i) Exposure to airborne chemical sprays such as agricultural pest controls.
- (ii) Exposure to excessive amounts of the sun's rays leading to sunburn and/or heat-stroke, and possible longer term problems.
- (iii) Bites and stings.
- (iv) Exposure to extreme cold or wet conditions.

## 3. Sprayed Pesticides

Lincolnshire is a large, predominately rural County. Much of the agricultural land is given over to arable use. Farmers have a need to control pests and diseases in their crops. This results in the frequent spraying of pesticides to control these pests and diseases. Pesticides are defined as a group of agrochemicals intended to destroy or control pests and diseases. Pesticides are named according to their intended use, e.g. insecticides are used against insects etc. Farmers also use fertilisers to increase their crop yield. The application of both of these may involve a wide range of equipment from aircraft to self-propelled sprayers; or from manually operated sprayers to application by hand. The substances in use vary and may include powders, granules, liquids or gases. Many may have an adverse effect on humans and livestock. Many may be toxic or have corrosive effects.

Staff who have to visit farmland or highways adjacent to farmland should be aware of the risk which may be encountered. There is a need to be vigilant to the presence of machinery which may be being used by farmers or their contractors for spraying pesticides or the application of fertilisers. While such machinery may be some distance away, spray may carry. This is especially true in breezy or light wind conditions. Staff should also note that some pesticides or fertilisers may still cause adverse effects some time after the initial application has been carried out. Staff who suspect that spraying operations are in progress should make sure they keep a safe distance from

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such operations. If in doubt leave the area immediately. If it is found necessary to withdraw from an area staff should inform their line managers as to why they left an area or abandoned their work. Staff who have to leave an area for this reason should not return to that area for a minimum of a few days. If this is not possible due to the demands of the work, then staff should endeavour not to touch or walk on any areas which they suspect of having been sprayed.

There are three main routes of entry into the body, these are:-

- (a) Inhalation - breathing pesticides into the lungs is more likely to happen if they are in the form of gases, fine spray droplets, dust, fumes and smoke. Gases mix with air. Others tend to remain suspended in the air for some time after release, for example by spraying. Often these particles are so small or well dispersed that they cannot be seen.
- (b) Skin absorption - pesticides act on pests and destroy them by penetrating the insect's skin or surfaces of plants considered to be weeds. Therefore, these substances can easily penetrate the intact human skin, if allowed to do so. Some formulations are especially hazardous if they are both toxic and contain penetrative solvents such as kerosene, petroleum products or xylene. These may pass through work clothing unnoticed by the worker.
- (c) Ingestion - contamination of the lips and mouth or accidental swallowing of pesticides is often caused by poor hygiene or bad practice. Failure to wash properly before eating is a common cause, as is smoking during work. Even very small quantities of a toxic substance could cause death if ingested in this way. Inhaled toxic substances could subsequently be ingested by swallowing contaminated sputum.

#### 4. Dealing with Exposure to Pesticides

Staff who are accidentally sprayed or come into contact with any sprayed pesticides/fertilisers should take the following action:-

- (a) Remove themselves well away from the affected area, in order to prevent being subsequently sprayed again;
- (b) Remove as much clothing, which has become soaked with chemical, as is possible, avoiding self contamination;
- (c) If the skin is affected by chemical burns then find a source of clean running water and immerse the affected skin for at least ten minutes. If the burn is serious then either send for an ambulance (if unable to drive) or drive to the nearest A and E. If possible try and find out as much information about the chemical as possible;
- (d) If the eyes are affected, irrigate them in clean, cold running water for at least 15-20 minutes, so that the water dilutes the chemicals and drain it

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away from the rest of the face. Both surfaces of the eyelids should be well irrigated.

- (e) In the case of ingestion then you should determine the type of chemicals involved and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

Staff who are aware, by experience, that they need to enter upon land which may have been treated with pesticides/fertilisers on a regular basis should carry with them two 300ml bottles of sterile eye wash. It is not generally expected that this will apply to a large proportion of the staff but to a few individuals within the Directorate.

Staff whose clothing becomes contaminated with pesticides/fertilisers should get them professionally cleaned. They should not be cleaned at home as contamination may be carried into other garments within the household. This may cause problems for other members of the household. Advice should be sought from your line manager before taking clothes to be cleaned.

**REMEMBER, IF IN ANY DOUBT, CONSULT THE NEAREST HOSPITAL, SUPPLYING THEM WITH AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE CHEMICALS AS YOU CAN FIND OUT.**

### 5. Effects of Exposure to the Sun and Heat

Staff who are required to work outdoors in the sunshine for significant periods of time may be at risk of being sunburnt or suffering the effects of heat. The most dangerous time for exposure to the sun is the three or four hours around the middle of the day, as the sun is at its strongest.

Suitable cool, light clothing (including a hat) should be worn to keep the sun off the skin (but remember that an open weave material may let ultra violet rays through). Shorts should not be worn if there is a likelihood of exposure to the sun. Use a sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), particularly on the parts of the body that are not easy to shade from the sun (e.g. the back of the hands and face). Have a supply of drinking water or other suitable liquid (no alcohol) to reduce the risk of dehydration.

Sensitivity to the sun varies and individuals should take care of themselves and advise their line managers of any problems that they may have had in the past or any current medicines which may make them more susceptible to exposure to the sun.

The effect of heat on the body will vary with the individual and also is dependent on temperature, humidity and duration of exposure. In order of increasing seriousness, the effects are:-

lassitude, irritability, discomfort

lowered work performance and lack of concentration

heat rashes

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heat cramps

heat exhaustion

heat-stroke.

Any effects up to heat cramps are readily amenable to cooling and the administration of salt and water supplements. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke signify the onset of the failure of the thermoregulatory mechanism of the body and demands rapid and effective cooling. Heat-stroke is the least common but most serious of heat disorders. It carries a high mortality rate, particularly if effective treatment is not given swiftly. The attack may be sudden or there may be warning symptoms such as irritability, dizziness or mental confusion. If in doubt about any symptoms, then obtain medical advice as soon as possible. If medical advice is not readily available then call an ambulance.

### 6. Exposure/Hypothermia

Staff who are required to work outdoors for prolonged periods in cold or wet conditions for significant periods of time may be at risk of suffering from hypothermia. It may be necessary to amend work patterns to provide opportunities for breaks. Such breaks should be used to allow staff to have hot drinks, warm themselves up and change any wet clothing. Moving air has a much greater cooling effect than still air, so the 'wind-chill factor' can substantially increase the risk. The following 'common-sense' precautions should be observed when working outdoors in cold or wet conditions:-

wear suitable warm protective clothing

minimise periods of exposure to such conditions

take breaks for warm refreshment

change wet clothes for dry ones at the earliest opportunity

Hypothermia can develop without the individual being aware of his/her deteriorating condition. The symptoms associated with hypothermia are:-

shivering

cold, pale, dry skin; the body feels "as cold as marble"

apathy, confusion, or irrational behaviour; occasionally belligerence

lethargy

failing consciousness

slow and shallow breathing

a slow and weakening pulse

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in extreme cases, cardiac arrest.

Staff who suspect that they or a colleague are beginning to suffer from hypothermia should seek medical advice as soon as possible. In the meantime the first priority must be to prevent the person losing more body heat and trying to warm up the body.

### 7. Bites and Stings

Outdoor work will involve exposure to the risk of receiving animal bites or stings. However, common sense can prevent many bites and stings.

Germs are harboured in the mouths of all animals (including humans). Bites from sharp, pointed teeth cause deep puncture wounds that carry germs far into the tissues. Serious wounds require hospital care; any bite breaking the skin needs prompt first aid, followed by medical attention. These wounds are very vulnerable to infection. Snake bites carry the additional risk of poisoning. It is very important to ensure that immunisations (e.g. tetanus) are up to date.

Bee, wasp and hornet stings are usually more painful and alarming than they are dangerous. An initial sharp pain is followed by mild swelling and soreness, which first aid can relieve. Some people, however, are allergic to these poisons and can rapidly develop the serious condition, *anaphylactic shock*. Multiple stings can have a dangerous cumulative effect. Stings in the mouth or throat should be taken very seriously, as the swelling they cause can obstruct the airway. Medical advice should be sought by anyone showing signs of an allergic reaction or following either multiple stings or stings in the mouth or throat.

### 8. Plant Hazards

Whilst most plants that grow in the UK are harmless, some sting, scratch or are poisonous. Care should be taken whilst walking alongside any vegetation and avoid all contact.

### 9. Notifiable Disease Outbreak

Outdoor work will entail visiting a number of premises associated with agriculture around the County.

In the event of a notifiable disease outbreak staff need to ensure that they do not exacerbate the problem and so cause further hardship and difficulty for our farming community.

Foot and Mouth Disease, Classical Swine Fever and Avian Flu affect farm livestock and in the relatively recent past Rhizomania has affected the sugar beet crop. These diseases can easily be spread from farm to farm through poor biosecurity.

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### Normal Protocol To Minimise Risk

DEFRA advice says ‘ Those who have a right of access through premises with farm animals, for example Public Footpaths and Bridleways, should respect the legal boundaries and legal notices and use any facilities provided to clean mud/manure off footwear and vehicles (wheels, wheel arches etc) Direct contact with animals should be avoided’.

Regular cleaning of footwear and equipment is recommended.

Operating Protocol During an outbreak of an Exotic Notifiable Animal Disease (or crop disease)

Visiting premises with susceptible animals (or crops) in the event of a disease outbreak increases the risk that the disease may be taken onto or off the premises.

No visits are to be made to such premises unless by prior arrangement with the farmer concerned. Use of disinfectant boot dips/wheel baths provided by the farmer is compulsory. If it is not known whether the farmer is at risk he/she should be contacted prior to visit to confirm.

It is likely that if there were such an outbreak in the County, disinfectant and cleaning equipment will be issued to those working in the outdoors to ensure the highest standards of Biosecurity are maintained. Use of this disinfectant and equipment is compulsory until instructed otherwise.

### Protocol for Premises Under Specific Disease Restrictions

It is unlikely that most visits by Highways staff will be deemed ‘essential’ so the assumption is **NO VISITS** to such premises or restricted areas.

If you are required to work in such an area a licence shall be issued to you from the Animal Health Divisional Office. It will be compulsory to work to the Highest levels of Biosecurity using disinfectant and PPE provided and disposing of it as instructed.