**Safety, Risk Assessment & Keeping the GSL Informed**

See – scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/risk-assessments/

Some basic rules about operating Scouting as it should be – NOT risk free, but managed risk.

Everyone has heard of risk assessment, but few people know how to do it properly. There are many misunderstandings about what it involves. The following is a simple (but accurate) guide to what you should be doing.

Assessing risk involves 4 main steps:

1. Identify the hazard
2. Work out the likelihood of that hazard happening
3. Work out the consequences if it did happen (who & what)
4. Work out what you can do to reduce the likelihood and/or the consequences if appropriate and do it

And that’s it – it’s that simple. You will need to record your findings and don’t forget to tell people about what they need to do to reduce the risks.

## Identify the hazard

Bad weather on a hike.

Spilt water on the floor during a cooking evening at a Pack meeting.

Things to trip over when playing games.

## Work out the likelihood of that hazard happening

Bad weather – time of year, weather forecast – could be very likely or very unlikely

Spilt water is almost guaranteed.

If things are in the game area trips are inevitable; if they are not where the game is played the likelihood is probably nil.

## Work out the consequences if it did happen (who & what)

Scouts could get cold/wet/sunstroke – but don’t get carried away, just because something could happen it doesn’t mean it will or that the worst possible consequences will always occur – be realistic.

A Cub could slip on the water and be injured – but again don’t get carried away, a slip like that is unlikely to cause major injury, if they are cooking they are not running around so a slip is most likely to result in nothing worse than a bruise.

If someone playing the game did trip they could easily break a bone.

Work out what you can do to reduce the likelihood and/or the consequences if appropriate and do it

Check weather forecast, make sure participants have appropriate clothing, risk is now reduced to acceptable levels. If the hazard occurs the consequences are no longer significant.

Leaders to be aware of possibility and mop up if spills occur – likelihood of fall reduced. No more significant action necessary as even if nothing is done the consequences are not severe.

Move trip hazards out of the way! Or if they can’t be moved, change the game or where it is played.

Actions & preventative measures should be proportionate to the risks; the consequences of the roof falling in would be horrendous, but the likelihood of it happening is so remote that the risk is minimal; therefore you don’t need to provide everyone with hard hats! Be sensible and realistic, talk it over with others, remember that many of the standard rules and procedures are mitigation measure in themselves – the rules say wear a lifejacket if canoeing, a reflective jacket if hiking at night, a safety harness if climbing etc. Don’t try to eliminate risk entirely, the only way to do that is to do nothing – Scouting is about taking risks in a managed and controlled way, the young people in our charge will learn a lot more from taking some managed risks than from avoiding every risk – they’ll have a lot more fun too!

Bottom line – if the chances of it going wrong are pretty high and the consequences of it going wrong are pretty severe think hard about changing it, not doing it, introducing some safety measures. If the consequences could be severe but the likelihood is low, or the likelihood of it going wrong is high but the possible consequences are insignificant don’t worry about it. For things between these extremes you need to think a bit harder and work out what measures to put in place and what instructions to issue.

Make sure that everyone in the section is fully involved in the process and the implementation. Communicate: before, during and after. Once you’ve done the activity review the risk assessment in preparation for next time, make sure it evolves and improves.

## Keeping the GSL informed

Use your common sense; if you are doing something out of the ordinary, going somewhere different, doing an adventurous activity, let the GSL know in advance. Work on the basis that if it all goes wrong and you need the help and/or support of the GSL it’s much easier for that to be given if what you were up to was known about in advance than if the GSL hasn’t got a clue what’s going on!