

Activity Risk Assessment for Forest School

Last updated:	December 2022	By:	Emma Dunn	Suggested next review	September 2024
Description:	Activities taking place during Forest School sessions e.g. den building, fire lighting, stream dipping, natural crafts, obstacle course, sensory games, cooking.				

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Rope/string	Rope burn, walking into taut rope, trip, entanglement	Children , adults, staff.	Warn children of potential hazards/harm. Discourage location of ropes in highly used areas of the site. Use bright coloured rope for visibility. Gloves to be worn if activity involves pulling a heavy rope. Monitor location of ropes and string and store away any unsecured rope and string at the end of the session.	2	2	4	Consider the use of other markers to increase visibility of rope and string e.g. hanging bags or objects off the rope or string. Closer supervision of younger children. Limit length of string / rope given out.	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (gloves), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

Fire	<p>Burns to people, clothing, and equipment.</p> <p>Causing a fire in the environment.</p>	Children, adults, staff.	<p>See Fire Procedure for safe siting, use and extinguishing.</p> <p>Set ground rules of not entering the fire circle unless invited by the FSL, not running towards the fire circle, sitting on the logs surrounding the fire circle or outside the fire circle rope marker, maximum of 2 people in the fire circle at one time, using a fire-resistant glove when tending to the fire or moving pots and pans on the fire. Safety equipment should be in place before any fire is lit.</p> <p>Fire lighting equipment to be stored away if not in use. FSL to supervise fire lighting. Fire to be lit at arms-length. Hair, loose clothing and sleeves to be tied / pulled up and out of the way when near the fire. Fire attended at all times. Fire extinguished thoroughly before leaving the site.</p>	1	5	5	Model behaviour.	<p>FSL – safety check of fire site before session, briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment, monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during</p>
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Waterbody / course	Getting wet / cold, drowning, waterborne diseases	Children , adults, staff.	<p>School and parent / carer advised to bring suitable clothing. Use platform, if available, or firm, stable bank. If entering the water, only enter in shallow, slow flowing water. Entry to be at a safe entry point. At least one adult in the water at all times when children are. One student in at a time per adult (may be adjusted if children are older). Only use shallow areas and point out deep areas to avoid.</p> <p>Demonstrate technique and discourage over-reaching.</p> <p>Children to always wash hands after contact with water and especially before eating.</p>	1	5	5	Model behaviour	<p>FSL – safety check of water and entrance / exit points before session, briefing before activity, monitor / guide / supervise during, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (hand washing area and / or hand gel)</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during</p>
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Collecting natural materials	Cuts and grazes, ingestion	Children , adults, staff.	Warn children to not pick up sharp objects. Provide water, soap and / or hand gel for children and adults to wash their hands before eating.	1	4	4	Model behaviour	<p>FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, monitor / guide during, provision of or advice on safety equipment (hand washing area and / or hand gel)</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Being off the ground	Injury by falling	Children , adults, staff.	Children advised not to climb higher than their height. Children to use spotter(s) to soften any falls. Extra care to be taken initially if children are not used to this kind of activity.	2	3	6	Monitor. Encourage children to check and clear the ground of any stones or branches that could cause injury.	FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, monitor / guide / supervise during School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during
Blindfolds	Slips, trips and falls, walking into a tree / branch	Children , adults, staff.	Children advised of the hazards and instructed to have a guide if walking when blindfolded. Use blindfolds that can be easily removed if needed.	2	4	8	Demonstration prior to the activity starting.	FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, monitor / guide / supervise during School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during

Cooking on a fire	Burns to people and clothing.	Children , adults, staff.	Maximum of 2 people in the fire circle at one time, using a fire-resistant glove when moving pots and pans on the fire. Hair, loose clothing and sleeves to be tied / pulled up and out of the way when near the fire.	2	4	8	Supervision by FSL or adult helper at all times.	<p>FSL – safety check of fire site before session, briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (gloves), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary) monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during</p>
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Preparing food outside	Food poisoning or allergic reaction.	Children , adults, staff.	<p>Have specific food cutting boards and utensils. Avoid using nuts and raw meat. If using, have a separate board / utensils for each.</p> <p>Hair to be tied up and out of the way, sleeves rolled up.</p> <p>Hands thoroughly washed with soap (preferably unscented). Blue plasters or gloves to be worn if any wounds or ailments on hands.</p> <p>Separate washing up bowls for: hand washing (preferably with warm water), dishes, fruit and vegetables. Disposable towels to dry hands. Regularly cleaned and dried dishcloths and tea towels for utensils and surfaces.</p> <p>Nail varnish, perfume and jewellery (except wedding band) should not be worn around food.</p> <p>Food preparation only to be done by people who are feeling well.</p>	2	4	8	<p>Consider using aprons.</p> <p>Consider preparing food under shelter to reduce the risk of natural materials falling into food.</p>	<p>FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (boards, utensils, washing up areas, cloths etc, gloves, blue plasters), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during</p>
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Running	Slips, trips and falls, walking into a tree / branch	Children , adults, staff.	Regular removal of any high risk hazards i.e. tripping hazards on paths. Highlight other hazard e.g. using tape or paint.	3	3	9	Warn children to look out for low branches and tripping hazards when moving through the forest.	<p>FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Felling trees	Branch or tree could fall onto someone or property	Children , adults, staff.	Only fell smaller / young trees (unless accompanied by a trained arboriculturalist). Ensure group and property is at least the distance of the height of the tree away in all directions. Work from above the cut if branch is substantial and / or have people to hold branch and lower to the ground safely.	2	5	10	Consider wearing helmets	<p>FSL – safety check of site before session, briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (helmets, gloves), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide / supervise during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide / supervise during</p>
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Lifting	Back injury, muscle strain injury	Children , adults, staff.	Lifting procedures in place – carry anything longer than themselves and wider than their wrist between two people. Bend your knees not your back. Carry close to the body.	2	3	6	<p>Model behaviour and ensure group understands the procedure.</p> <p>Leader and helpers to step in if branches are not being carried correctly.</p>	<p>FSL – briefing before activity, monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
Lifting and swinging sticks	Bangs	Children , adults, staff.	Lifting procedures in place (see above). Safety procedure – same as tools – use two arms and a tool (stick) length away from anyone else.	2	4	8	Monitor.	<p>FSL – briefing before activity, monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

Shelter	Collapse, injury from or running into and tripping	Children , adults, staff.	Only use poles as tall as their reach and as wide as their wrist when constructing above head height.	3	3	6	Advise re. construction, material and movement to avoid injury	<p>FSL – briefing before activity, monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Explanatory notes:

- **Hazard** – anything that can cause harm or potential to cause harm
- **Harm** – caused by hazard. The potential harm is what that hazard may cause. If the hazard is working on ladders then impact with ground will be the harm
- **People at risk** – those likely to be affected by the hazard
- **Existing preventative measures** – what is already in place to prevent that hazard from causing harm, such as, policy and procedure, barriers to prevent access etc.
- **Risk** – is the chance high or low that somebody will be harmed by the hazard.
- **Probability** – the likelihood that the hazard will cause harm
- **Severity** – the seriousness of the incident that may be caused
- **Rating** – the probability multiplied by the severity gives a figure from 1 – 25. Any hazard scoring above 12 will need to have immediate additional control measure put in place to prevent a serious accident.
- **What measures need to be taken** – additional control measures that need to be put in place to reduce and further minimise the risk. These may be immediate or a process to be done over a longer period of time (possibly carried out by the group i.e. brashing trees to prevent eye injuries).
- **Who / when** – a record of who is responsible for implementing any action relating to that hazard

Severity	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Probability					

Rating	
16 – 25	Very high – do not proceed unless substantial additional measures (seek approval)
12 – 15	High – ensure adequate immediate additional measures
6 – 10	Medium – consider addition measures
1 – 5	Low – proceed

P (Probability of injury 1 - 5) x S (severity of injury 1 - 5) = R (consequential risk - PxS, 1 - 25)

Severity	
5	Major accident - multiple serious injuries or fatality
4	Serious injury / multiple injuries - requiring immediate medical attention.
3	Injury - requiring non-immediate professional medical attention.
2	Minor injury - basic first aid administered. This would include minor cuts, bruising, abrasions and strains or sprains of ligaments, tendons, muscles.
1	Not serious - no first aid required

Probability	
5	Almost certain - very likely to occur (>95% chance)
4	Probable - more likely than not to occur (75% chance)
3	Possible - has the potential to occur (50% chance)
2	Remote - unlikely to occur (25% chance)
1	Improbable - very unlikely to occur (<5% chance)

P (Probability of injury 1 - 5) x S (severity of injury 1 - 5) = R (consequential risk - $P \times S$, 1 - 25)