

Volunteer Health and Safety Guidebook



making this place home



November 2021



Rangitikei is a district full of passionate, community minded people with a 'Get on and Get it done' attitude.

It is a large part of what makes us an awesome place to live in. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved and to volunteer with various clubs and groups, including with Council.

While we 'Get on and Get it done' it is important that we look after ourselves, each other, and the area in which we are working, not to mention the public that might be passing by. Government created the 'NZ Health and Safety at Work Act' in 2015 to give us rules and guidelines on what to do to stay safe.

This booklet may be used by:

- Volunteer groups doing work for Council or on Council land, where the Team Leader is also a volunteer
- Council staff who are managing volunteer's/volunteer group.

It has been designed to guide Council and volunteers to ensure we meet our obligations under the Act but most importantly minimise the risk of anyone being hurt or the environment being damaged.

Government Acts can be difficult to understand so Mahi Haumarū (WorkSafe NZ) has created a handy fact sheet specific for volunteers, which we have included at the back of this booklet.

Volunteer opportunities may be driven by Council or may be as a result of an idea or project from the community. It is important that the owner of any property you plan to volunteer on knows and approves of your activity, this includes Council owned property or facilities. If you are unsure if Council is the property owner please contact our offices, and if we are: then our amazing customer service team will get you in touch with the right person to talk to.

Some projects may need to be discussed with your local Community Board, Community Committee or even Council (Elected members). Our friendly Council team can help you identify if this is needed and how to go about it. Council also have a handy step-by-step guide if you want to develop Council owned land or facilities.

Cultural Health and Safety is important too. Rangitikei District Council is committed to continue to strengthen relationships with iwi and hapu in our district. We embrace our responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and understand that mana whenua hold special cultural and spiritual connections with the land and environment. This includes wahi tapu (sacred sites), taonga (treasures), water and ancestral lands. Whether the volunteer work being undertaken is on council owned land or not it is good practice to connect with mana whenua. There are many benefits in looking for opportunities to learn from and engage with mana whenua with any project including learning about local history, understanding traditional views and practices, and building your volunteer group. If you would like help to identify and contact mana whenua in your project area our Strategic Advisor for Mana Whenua can assist you.

Mana whenua means people of Māori descent who have historical and territorial rights over an area.

Ok – lets 'Get on and Get it done'.



Quick glance details

Name of Project	
Location:	
Volunteer Group Leader:	Name: Phone #
* Council Contact:	Name: Phone #

In this booklet you will find:

- A flow chart on how to “Get on and Get it done”
- Basic Safety Advice
- Risky Business or Is it?
- Hazard Assessment tools
- Some common Hazards and how to avoid them
- Hazard Register and Plan Template
- On the day Volunteer Briefing and Participants Template
- Volunteer Emergency Procedure
- Incident Register
- Mahi Haumarū (WorkSafe NZ) fact sheets for volunteers and an explanation on terms like PCBU and Volunteer Worker and what that might mean for your project.



* The Council Contact is the RDC employee who is managing or supporting the Volunteer Group.

'Get on and Get it Done' Flow Chart

**You've got a project and a group that want to volunteer on Council owned property or
Council has called for volunteers or
you are a Council team member leading a volunteer group and you're going to lead the charge?**
Have you read our handy guide 'Community -Led Development of Council owned Facilities?'
This will help you and us understand the project if it is your idea.



Project Plan sorted!!
Now its time to think about how to keep you, your volunteers, the environment and the public safe.
If you need a Traffic Management Plan Council will help you to make contact with the right people



Identify all the hazards and risks associated with doing the project.
That's what this booklet is for and council staff can guide you through it
Think about the types of tools and equipment you need, lifting of heavy or large objects,
and what might cause tripping, stabbing, piercing, falling, straining
Council staff can help you with this.



Rate the hazards using the **Risk Matrix Setting** on page 7 and fill out the **Hazard Register and Plan** on page 11
Noting how you are going minimise the risks
Council staff can help you with this too!!



Get sign off from Council
And rally the troops



On the day, brief the volunteers using the **Project Checklist and Volunteer Form** on page 13 and completed
Hazards Register and Plan.
Get the group to sign the volunteers register on page 14 and











"Get on and Get it Done"

In the unfortunate event that someone hurts themselves, ring your Council Contact to let them know
and fill out the incident form on page 14 and return it to your Council Contact as soon as possible.

Remember to call 111 in any case of an emergency

Basic Safety Advice



-  Wear footwear and clothing that can cope with the conditions and terrain you will be working in. Sensible boots or shoes, warm clothing and in some cases, overalls are essential.
-  Check to see if your site has good mobile phone coverage, if not you may have to find an alternative form of communication.
-  Carry a mobile phone and exchange phone numbers with your key Council contact so that you can contact each other (there is a place at the back of this guide to record these details).
-  Be sun smart: sunscreen, a hat and appropriate clothing to protect you from the sun's harmful rays. Remember to 'slip, slop, slap and wrap'. Make sure everyone brings water or supply it for the group.
-  Bring something to eat and drink or organise food for everyone.
-  Take plenty of breaks and get help from your buddies if you need to do any heavy lifting.
-  Have a first aid kit available and identify someone onsite who is trained in basic first aid.
-  Make sure you (and your team) have medication with you if you suffer from allergies, asthma, or other medical conditions. Let someone in your group know what to do if something happens to you.
-  Ensure the tools work safely and are checked each day before you start your project and that your members are trained or experienced in their use.
-  Only use power or mechanically driven tools if you have proper experience and safety equipment and have discussed the project thoroughly with your Council contact and group leader.

Risky Business – or is it?

Now the technical looking Stuff – it's not as difficult as it looks and your council contact can help you fill these bits out.



The Risk Matrix Settings below is how we 'rate' the hazard, a combination of the likelihood of it happening and the level of consequence if it does happen.

RISK MATRIX SETTINGS					
LIKELIHOOD			CONSEQUENCE		
1 RARE	Highly unlikely, but may occur in exceptional circumstances		1 INSIGNIFICANT	Injury requires first aid treatment or pain and discomfort requiring intervention e.g. workstation assessment	
2 UNLIKELY	Not expected, but some possibility it could occur at some time		2 MINOR	Injury or illness requires medical treatment or another registered practitioner	
3 POSSIBLE	Might occur at some time – similar occurrences are known to have happened		3 MODERATE	Injury or illness results in time lost from work for one day/ shift or more. Notice is issued by Health and Safety Officer	
4 LIKELY	Will probably occur at some time in most circumstances		4 MAJOR	Injury or illness results in 30 days lost time, or a permanent disability. Organisation breaches law resulting in prosecution and penalties	
5 ALMOST CERTAIN	Expected to occur in most circumstances		5 EXTREME	One or more fatalities. Considerable penalties and prosecutions, multiple lawsuits and jail terms	

Once you've got your scales of likelihood and consequence for the hazard or risk from the Risk Matrix Settings above you then use the Risk Matrix below to calculate the overall level of risk.

Let's use an example...



You are doing a project which involves moving large heavy bags of compost to fill a community garden.

Step 1:

Identify the Hazards of your project – what could go wrong?

Injury from lifting and moving heavy objects

Step 2:

If you did nothing to minimise the hazard, what is the likelihood and consequence of that hazard happening?

It might look like:

Likelihood = 3 Possible, and **Consequence** = 3 Moderate.

This intersects on the Risk Matrix as a Medium Risk **Orange**

Step 3:

Once you decide on an action to minimise the hazard risk (known as a control measure) such as: more than one person lifting, use of trolleys and wheel barrows to move loads, drop load off at planting point), you then re-assess the risk and it might look like this

Likelihood = 2, and **Consequence** = 2 Minor. This intersects on the risk Matrix as a **Low-Risk**.

If the assessment of risk comes out at moderate or higher, then better minimising actions (control measures) need to be put into place, or there needs to be a sign-off by Rangitikei District Council.

Sometimes we may have to accept that a particular hazard is too risky and we can't undertake that part of a project and may need to get a skilled professional for that aspect.

RISK MATRIX					
	Consequence				
	1 - Insignificant	2 - Minor	3 - Significant	4 - Major	5 - Catastrophic
5 - Almost certain	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
4 - Likely	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme
3 - Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
2 - Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
1 - Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low

This graph is to help you and Council identify who can sign off your Hazard Register and Plan. There's a Hazard Register and Plan Template later in this guide.

RISK TOLERANCE AND ACTIONS				
Risk Rating	Risk Tolerance	Approval	Actions/Mitigations	Monitoring Review
LOW	Tolerable risk with current controls measures	RDC Safety & Wellbeing Advisor	<p>Proceed and monitor if there are no other potential control measures that may be practicable to reduce the risk further.</p> <p>Monitor to ensure the effectiveness taking corrective action where necessary.</p>	Annually or if activity / action changes
MEDIUM	Risk can be tolerated in exceptional circumstances	RDC Safety & Wellbeing Advisor and Department Manager/Team Leader	<p>Review risk assessment and introduce further controls to reduce risk to acceptable level.</p> <p>Team Leader to sign off. Controls to be actively monitored to ensure effectiveness.</p>	Quarterly or if activity/ action changes
HIGH	Undesirable Risk	Department Group Manager and Group Manager People & Culture	<p>Stop tasks and reassess activity immediately. Control measures are in place to lower risk to acceptable levels. Detailed risk assessment with further controls to be approved by Department Head (GM). Controls to be actively monitored to ensure effectiveness.</p>	Monthly or if activity/action changes
EXTREME	Unacceptable Risk	RDC Executive Leadership Team	<p>Stop task and reassess activity immediately. Detailed risk assessment with further controls to be developed. Activity can only resume when approved by Executive Leadership Team under advice from the Safety and Wellbeing Advisor. Control measures to be actively monitored to ensure effectiveness.</p>	Monthly or if activity/action changes

Some Common Hazards and how to avoid them



- **People with hand tools working too close together** (ensure at least 2 metres between workers).
- **Sharp objects in rubbish** (take care when handling rubbish).
- **Unsafe use of hand tools** (show new volunteers how to use tools correctly).
- **Uneven ground** (take care to avoid falls and sprains).
- **Slippery or falling rocks and steep or unstable banks** (avoid potential problem areas, choose routes carefully).
- **Poor lifting technique** (bend knees when lifting and get help if required – the safe limit will differ from person to person but no one should be lifting anything heavy without help).
- **Water** – cold or polluted water or rising streams (avoid where possible and be prepared to postpone work if necessary).
- **Sudden adverse weather conditions** (check the weather report for the day, wear suitable clothing and be prepared to postpone work if necessary).
- **Vegetation, including rotten branches, trees and thorny or poisonous plants** e.g nettle (avoid where possible, report concerns to Rangitīkei District Council and never climb trees).
- **Fast moving tides if working on a beach** (check the tidal and weather reports for the day, take care and postpone work if necessary).
- **Roads Footpaths and Berms**
– talk to Council about a Traffic Management Plan
- **Heat/tiredness** (seek shade, take adequate rest, food and drink, rotate and share the workload).
- **Beehive or wasp nests** – leave the area if a nest or hive is disturbed; report wasp nests to Rangitīkei District Council for eradication.

Traffic Management Plan



One of the biggest hazard risks can be injury to those walking or driving by.

To help minimise this a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) may have to be put in place if the activity or event affects a road, footpath or berm. This is a specialised plan that must be completed by a registered person. Your Council Contact can help you connect with the right people.

The plan details how road users - including cars, cyclists and pedestrians - will be directed around a work site or road disruption, to minimise inconvenience while providing safe conditions for both the road user and those carrying out the activity.

Hazard Register and Plan Template

Have a copy of this list with your Volunteer Sign in Register – so that everyone knows what risks are present and how to minimise them. A larger tear out version is on the following page.

Name of Project:					
Council Contact Name					
Group Leader:					
Council Contact Phone					
Start and Finish Date:					
Hazard Register and Plan approved and signed by Council.					
Name		Signed		Date	
ACTIVITY STEPS	POTENTIAL HAZARDS/ RISKS	RISK RATING <i>Using Risk Matrix</i>	RISK CONTROL MEASURE	RISK RATING <i>Using Risk Matrix</i>	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
<i>List required steps in performing the project</i>	<i>Against each activity step list the risk these hazards pose</i>	<i>*Low</i> <i>*Medium</i> <i>*High</i> <i>*Extreme</i>	<i>For each identified risk</i>	<i>*Low</i> <i>*Medium</i> <i>*High</i> <i>*Extreme</i>	<i>Who is responsible for implementing risk control</i> <i>What is the time frame, if any?</i>

Note for staff: Photocopy and store on Sharepoint.

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ACTIVITY STEPS	POTENTIAL HAZARDS/ RISKS	RISK RATING Using Risk Matrix	RISK CONTROL MEASURE	RISK RATING Using Risk Matrix	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
List required steps in performing the project	Against each activity step list the risk these hazards pose	*Low *Medium *High *Extreme	For each identified risk	*Low *Medium *High *Extreme	Who is responsible for implementing risk control What is the time frame, if any?



On the Day Project Checklist and Volunteer Form



Checklist:

- ☒ Permission to work
- ☒ First Aid Kit
- ☒ Hazard Register and Plan signed off by Council and available for volunteers to read
- ☒ Emergency Procedures understood and Assembly location identified (page 16)

Briefing note suggestions:

- Welcome Everyone
- Purpose of the Project:
- Introduce the Project Leader
- Introduce the First Aider and where the First Aid kit is
- If any one has a medical condition or medication let the First Aider know
- Explain Evacuation procedure and Assembly Location
- What happens in a natural event like an earthquake?
- Has everyone got the right clothing and equipment (like gloves) needed for the tasks
- Remind people to drink water, be sun smart, and eat
- Point out where the toilet is
- Time frame for the day including breaks
- Note the Hazards (from your Hazard Register and Plan) and the way to minimise risk of injury, tools they can use, and any specialist tools they can't, are there any chemicals being used?
- Parents and Guardians are responsible for children
- Thank everyone and make sure they sign the Volunteer Register

Volunteer Register

Have a copy of this list with your Volunteer Sign in Register – so that everyone knows what risks are present and how to minimise them.

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Volunteer Emergency Procedures



In the event of an emergency, which includes natural disasters, serious accidents and incidents, the following procedures are to be taken:

- All work in progress is to stop immediately unless further work is required to directly reduce or stop further personal injury.
- Ensure own safety.
- Any emergency first aid is to be given to injured persons.
- Any emergency services required should be contacted giving details of the type of injuries the person has sustained and the exact location of where the injured person is.
- If the accident site is difficult to find, someone should meet any required emergency services at a pre-determined location to reduce the chance of getting lost.
- After emergency services have arrived, any assistance they may require will be offered by volunteers.
- All non-essential persons will be kept clear of the site.
- Contact Rangitikei District Council on 0800 422 522 as soon as practicable.
- Where a person has been seriously harmed no person shall alter the accident scene without the permission of Work Safe except to:
 - Save a life or prevent further harm to any person
 - Maintain access for emergency services
 - Prevent serious damage or loss of property.
- An incident/accident report coupled with the investigation procedure will begin.

Accident procedures

Accidents do occasionally happen so you should always have a suitable first aid kit and mobile phone on hand just in case.

Rangitikei District Council can supply first aid kits, if required. If someone is injured:

- Stop work and provide emergency first aid and support
- Call emergency services if necessary
- Advise Rangitikei District Council (RDC) as soon as possible on 0800 422 522
- Prepare an Accident/Incident/Near Miss Form with assistance from Rangitikei District Council on page 17

Emergency Contact Numbers

Ambulance, Fire, Police

111

National Poisons Centre

0800 764 766

For WorkSafe codes of practice please visit <https://worksafe.govt.nz>.

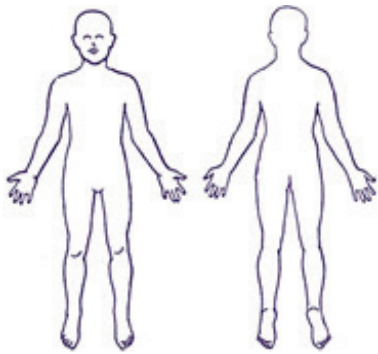
Flood Earthquake, Fire, Storms

In the event of volunteers being caught in a natural disaster, the following procedure should be taken:

- Stop all work
- All volunteers are to meet at a pre-determined area and everyone is to be accounted for and wait further instruction

Accident/Incident/Near Miss Form

Please ensure this is an accurate record –circle option above

Name of organisation:	DAMAGED PROPERTY		
Address:	Property/equipment/material damaged:		
Branch/department			
ACCIDENT DETAILS			
Date of accident: / /			
Time:			
Location:			
Date reported:			
INJURED/INVOLVED PERSON DETAILS			
Name:			
Date of birth / /			
Contact number:	Describe what happened:		
Length of employment:	Description of damage		
Hours worked before accident:			
TYPE OF INJURY			
<input type="checkbox"/> Amputation	<input type="checkbox"/> Bruising	<input type="checkbox"/> Object/substance causing damage:	What caused the accident?
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Reaction	<input type="checkbox"/> Dislocation	<input type="checkbox"/> Scratch	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fracture	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal	<input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):			
Injured part of the body:		ACCIDENT DETAILS	
		Could this accident happen again? (Yes/No)	
		What actions could be taken to prevent another accident occurring?	
Comments:		TREATMENT & INVESTIGATION	
		Type of treatment given:	
		Name of involved First Aider(s):	
		Investigated by:	
		Worksafe advised (Yes/No):	



Accident Investigation Form

As part of the PCBU's due diligence responsibilities, officers must take all reasonable steps to respond/investigate in a timely manner an incident or accident reported to them.

You can include your organisation's Health and Safety Representative or work committee in your investigation.

Event Number: _____ Date: _____

Investigator Name: _____

Who the Investigation included (Worker/Other persons): _____

INFORMATION DETAILS:

(Interview notes from injured person, witnesses, observations, photos, notes, current procedures)

Describe what information you have collected about this event: _____

DESCRIBE WHAT NEEDS TO BE INVESTIGATED

(Summarise the event)

ANALYSIS

Describe what key factor(s) contributed to the event:

(Consider tasks, people factors, system, environmental factors, equipment, culture (how we do things here), weather conditions etc.)



WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS AND RISKS?

Does our hazard and risk register need to be updated/changed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Updated on: _____

ACTION DETAILS

Describe what needs to be actioned to fix the situation:

(What changes are required (think about training documents/instructions, procedures), who approves them, who needs to be informed about them).

Action plan assigned to: _____

Date action due: _____

Date action completed: _____

SIGNED OFF BY

Has this event triggered an HSWA 'Notifiable event/death/injury/illness or incident'? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, has WorkSafe been informed? ☐ Yes ☐ No _ Date advised: _____

Time of call or email sent: _____

Name of job title of person at WorkSafe: _____

Incident/Accident Number _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Title: _____ Contact number: _____

FACT SHEET

INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

The obligations, duties and rights contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) make it clear that everyone has a role to play in ensuring health and safety at work. This fact sheet explains how HSWA applies to volunteers.

VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION OR PCBU

WHAT IS A PCBU?

A PCBU is a 'person conducting a business or undertaking'. A PCBU may be an individual person or an organisation. A 'business' is a profit making entity, whereas an 'undertaking' may not be commercial in nature. HSWA places duties on all PCBUs (see below).

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION?

A volunteer association is a group of volunteers working together for a community purpose who do not employ any person under a contract of service. Purposes could include the promotion of art, culture, science, religion, education, medicine, or to support a charity, sport or recreation activity.

Volunteer associations do not have health and safety duties under HSWA, as they are not PCBUs.

Other volunteer organisations are recognised as PCBUs and have the same duties as other PCBUs

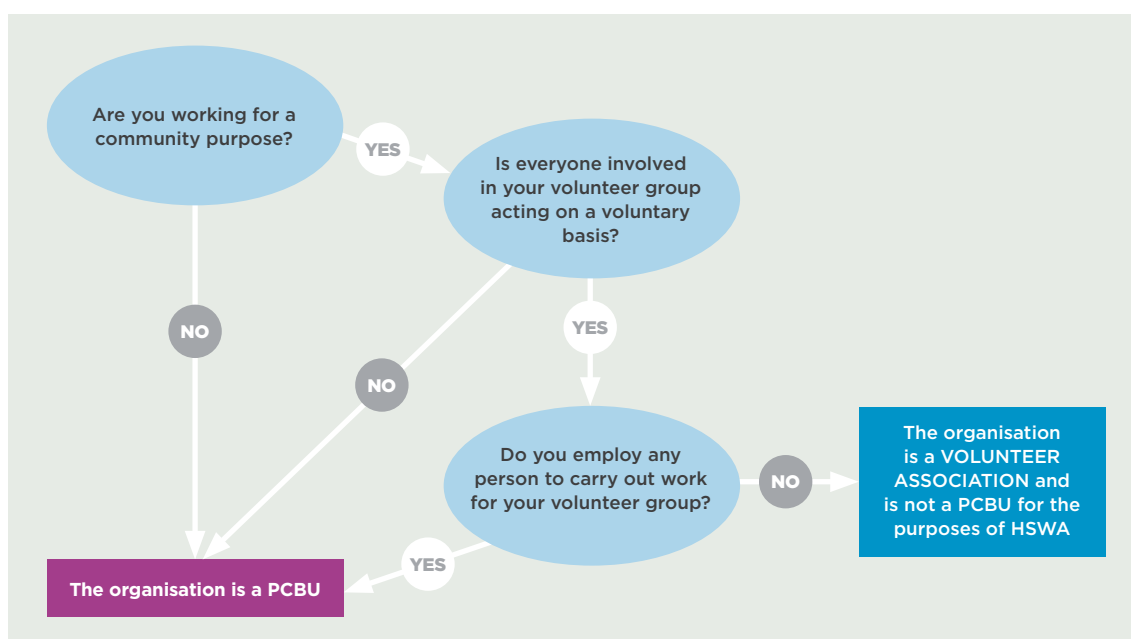


Figure 1: PCBU or volunteer association?

ARE YOU A VOLUNTEER?

You are a volunteer if you do work that you don't receive payment or reward for. You may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, for example you may be reimbursed for your petrol expenses if your volunteer work requires you to drive.

ARE YOU A VOLUNTEER WORKER FOR A PCBU?

Some volunteers are classified as volunteer workers and are treated as 'workers' under HSWA (except for worker engagement, participation and representation purposes).

You are a volunteer worker if:

- > you are doing work for a PCBU that has knowledge you are doing the work or has given consent for you to do the work
- > you work for the PCBU on an ongoing and regular basis
- > the work is an integral part of the business or undertaking
- > the work is not:
 - participating in fund raising
 - assisting with sports or recreation for an educational institute sports club or recreation club
 - assisting with activities for an educational institute outside its premises or
 - providing care for another person in the volunteers home.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE PCBU YOU VOLUNTEER FOR?

A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of:

- > workers who work for the PCBU, while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking
- > workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the PCBU, while the workers are carrying out the work.

A PCBU must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other people is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking. This duty is owed to volunteers who are not volunteer workers.

A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that volunteer workers have:

- > A work environment that is free from risks to health and safety. This can include risks of physical harm such as injuries and ill health and risks to your psychological health.
- > Safe equipment, structures and systems of work.
- > Safe use, handling, and storage of plant, substances and structures.
- > Adequate and accessible welfare facilities such as toilets, drinking water, washing and eating facilities.
- > The necessary information, training, instruction, or supervision to do the work safely. For example it may be necessary for you to receive an induction, personal protective equipment, emergency plans, support dealing with clients who may have challenging behaviours.
- > The monitoring of worker health (where relevant) and the exposures at the workplace, for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of controls.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

If you're a volunteer you must take reasonable care of your own safety and take care not to do anything which could harm another person. You should follow all reasonable safety instructions given to you by the PCBU, so that they can comply with their obligations under HSWA and its regulations (these are the duties of other persons at workplaces).

If you're a volunteer worker, you have the same health and safety duties as paid workers. In addition to the duties above you must also co-operate with any reasonable health and safety policy or procedure of the PCBU, as long as this has been notified to you.

Reasonable care means that you should do what a reasonable person would do in the same circumstances. This is for you to determine, however the following considerations may be helpful:

- > the skills and knowledge you have
- > what the risks and outcomes are
- > the resources you have available.

Some steps you can take include:

- > only doing tasks that have been assigned to you
- > only doing tasks that you have been trained to do or are familiar with
- > not doing tasks that you think are unsafe
- > reporting new hazards and risks to the PCBU
- > being familiar with the PCBU's health and safety policies and rules
- > providing feedback on health and safety issues
- > using any personal protection equipment that is provided, and storing and maintaining it as instructed
- > participating in health monitoring programmes.

CAN YOU BE PROSECUTED?

You could be prosecuted if you fail to meet a duty as a volunteer or volunteer worker.

WHAT ABOUT VOLUNTEER OFFICERS?

For information about volunteer officers, see the fact sheet *Information for officers who are volunteers*.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about what a PCBU's duty to volunteers is, see the fact sheet *Information for PCBUs that engage volunteers*.

PUBLISHED: MARCH 2016. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2018.

FACT SHEET

INFORMATION FOR PCBU_s THAT ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

The primary piece of legislation that governs health and safety in New Zealand is the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA). This fact sheet explains the health and safety duties of a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) that engages volunteers.

PCBU OR VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION

WHAT IS A PCBU?

A PCBU is a 'person conducting a business or undertaking'. A PCBU may be an individual person or an organisation. A 'business' is a profit making entity, whereas an 'undertaking' may not be commercial in nature.

It does not include workers or officers of PCBUs, volunteer associations with no employees, or home occupiers that employ or engage a tradesperson to carry out residential work.

HSWA places duties on all PCBUs.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION?

A volunteer association is a group of volunteers working together for a community purpose who do not employ any person. Purposes could include the promotion of art, culture, science, religion, education, medicine, or to support a charity, sport or recreation activity.

Volunteer associations do not have health and safety duties under HSWA, as they are not PCBUs.

Other volunteer organisations are recognised as PCBUs and have the same duties as other PCBUs.

IF YOU ARE A PCBU, DO YOU HAVE VOLUNTEER WORKERS OR OTHER VOLUNTEERS?

Some volunteers are classified as **volunteer workers** and are treated as 'workers' under HSWA except for worker engagement, participation and representation purposes.

A volunteer is a volunteer worker when:

- > they work for a PCBU who knows they are doing the work or has given consent for the work to be done
- > the volunteer does the work on an ongoing and regular basis
- > the work is an integral part of the business or undertaking and
- > the work is not:
 - participating in fundraising
 - assisting with sports or recreation for an educational institute, sports club or recreation club
 - assisting with activities for an educational institute outside its premises or
 - providing care for another person in the volunteer's home eg foster care.

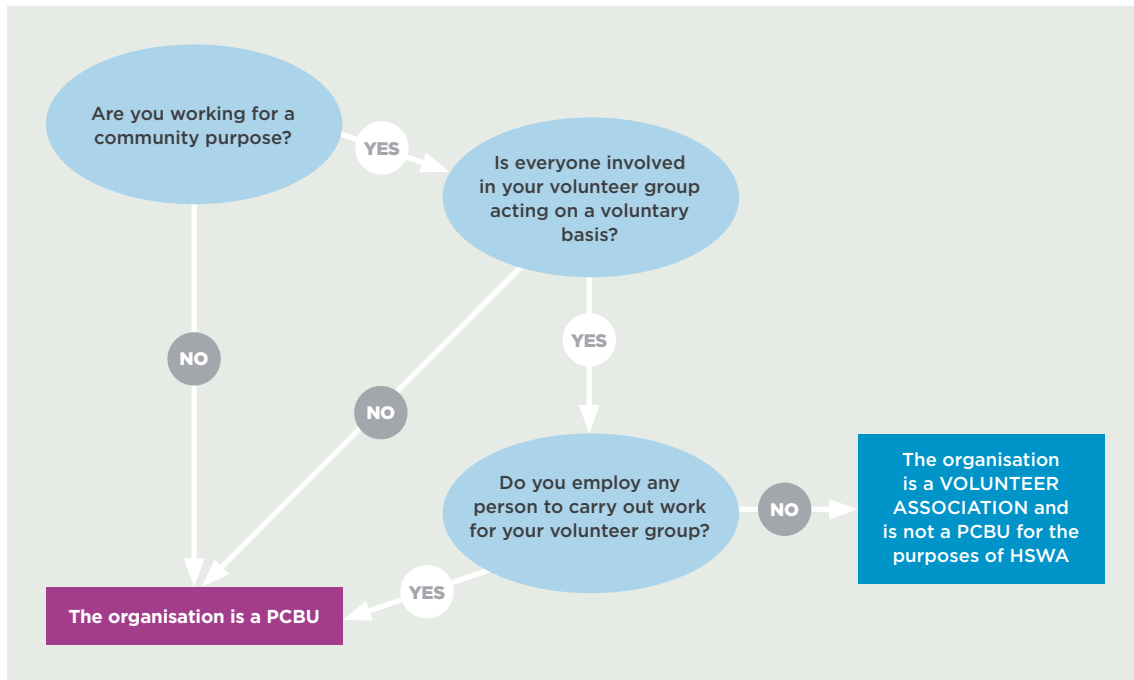


Figure 1: PCBU or volunteer association?

THE PRIMARY DUTY OF CARE OF A PCBU TOWARDS VOLUNTEER WORKERS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS

A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of:

- > workers who work for the PCBU, while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking
- > workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the PCBU, while the workers are carrying out the work.

A PCBU must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other people is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking. This duty is owed to **volunteers who are not volunteer workers**.

The primary duty of care is a broad overarching duty. It includes but is not limited to providing:

- > a work environment that is free from risks to health and safety
- > safe equipment, structures and systems of work
- > provision for safe use, handling, and storage of plant, substances, and structures
- > adequate and accessible welfare facilities
- > the necessary information, training, instruction, or supervision to do the work safely
- > monitoring of worker health and workplace exposures to assess effectiveness of controls.

The same level of protection required by the primary duty of care must be given to volunteer workers as paid workers (except for worker engagement, participation and representation purposes).

WHAT IS REASONABLY PRACTICABLE?

The primary duty of care to ensure health and safety is limited by what is reasonably practicable. PCBUs are not expected to guarantee the health or safety of their workers (or others who may be affected by work carried out as part of the business or undertaking), but they must do what can reasonably be done to ensure health and safety.

Factors that will affect what is reasonably able to be done include:

- > the hazards and risks associated with the work and the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring
- > the severity of the injury or harm to health that could result from the hazard or risk
- > what the person knows or reasonably should know about the hazard or risk and the ways of eliminating or minimising it
- > what can be done to eliminate or minimise the risks and how available and suitable these risk controls may be
- > as a final consideration, the cost associated with eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether it is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

WHAT ABOUT NATIONAL NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS WITH REGIONAL BRANCHES OR CHAPTERS?

A PCBU has a primary duty of care for all its workers (including volunteer workers) as set out above, regardless of the location of the work. For example, a PCBU with workers in a national office and volunteer workers at a regional office owes duties to their workers at both locations.

Depending on the structure of the organisation the regional office may be a PCBU, which would owe workers at that office a duty of care. If this is the case, the PCBU operating the national office and the PCBU operating the regional office would each have duties to, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate with, and coordinate their activities. This ensures that workers (and others) are being properly protected, and nothing 'falls through the gaps'.

If there is only one PCBU, the steps a national office PCBU could take to make sure that health and safety is managed throughout the organisation include:

- > providing the regional groups with health and safety procedures
- > providing information about risks and tools such as risk assessment templates

- > training volunteers to work safely
- > sending health and safety updates
- > sharing information about health and safety incidents
- > ensuring all regional offices have emergency procedures in place
- > having a designated health and safety contact person at the national office.

The PCBU must make their own assessment of what they can reasonably do to ensure health and safety, as they are best placed to assess their own organisation.

WHAT ARE SOME RISKS THAT VOLUNTEERS MIGHT FACE WHILE AT WORK?

Volunteers may face a range of risks that could cause them harm while at work. Harm can be physical or psychological.

Physical injury can be caused by work equipment or the work environment such as from:

- > electric shock
- > falls from height
- > contact with moving machinery parts
- > exposure to hazardous substances
- > slips, trips and falls
- > non-ergonomic work stations.

Acute or chronic ill-health can result from work. Examples include:

- > melanoma from UV exposure
- > hearing loss from excessive noise
- > neurological damage from solvent exposure
- > legionnaires disease from exposure to contaminated soil.

Psychological harm such as anxiety, stress and depression can be caused by the demands of the work such as:

- > workload
- > challenging client behaviour
- > bullying
- > organisational change
- > lack of control over the work.

PCBUs need to think about how their workers' health and safety (including volunteer workers) could be put at risk while doing their work and do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate or minimise the risk.

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF VOLUNTEER OFFICERS, VOLUNTEER WORKERS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS?

DUTY OF VOLUNTEER OFFICERS

Officers of a PCBU, including officers who are volunteers, have a duty to exercise due diligence to ensure that the PCBU complies with its duties and obligations under HSWA. They are only required to exercise the care, diligence, and skill that a reasonable officer would exercise, taking into account the nature of the business or undertaking and their position and responsibilities.

In exercising due diligence, officers must take reasonable steps to:

- > know about work health and safety matters and keep up-to-date
- > gain an understanding of the operations of the PCBU and the hazards and risks generally associated with those operations
- > ensure the PCBU has appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise those risks and uses those resources and processes
- > ensure the PCBU has appropriate processes for receiving information about incidents, hazards and risks, and for responding to that information
- > ensure the PCBU has processes for complying with any duty under HSWA, and that these are implemented
- > verify that these resources and processes are in place and being used.

While volunteer officers have this due diligence duty they cannot be prosecuted under HSWA for failing to meet it.

DUTIES OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Volunteer workers have the same duties as other workers.

These are to:

- > take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- > take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others
- > comply, so far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given to them by the PCBU to allow the PCBU to comply with HSWA and related regulations
- > cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the PCBU relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.

DUTIES OF OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers who are not volunteer workers have the same duties that all other persons have at a workplace.

These are to:

- > take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- > take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affected the health and safety of others
- > comply, so far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given to them by the PCBU to allow the PCBU to comply with HSWA and related regulations.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about volunteer officers, see the fact sheet *Information for officers who are volunteers*.

For information about volunteers, see the fact sheet *Information for volunteers*.

PUBLISHED: MARCH 2016. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2018.



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