



Litter Champions

A guide for organisers undertaking litter picking activities safely



Boston Borough Council are committed to providing a safe and hazard free environment for employees, volunteers, visitors, contractors and members of the public.

To enable them to achieve these objectives, please read the enclosed instructions and observe them at all times.

Litter picking safely

The litter picking activities undertaken by volunteers are greatly appreciated by Boston Borough Council as not only do they benefit the local community but also the local environment.

However, as with all activities there are potential risks associated with this type of work. To enable you to undertake this work without placing yourself or others at risk please read and follow the instruction in this leaflet.

The safest way to pick up litter is by using purpose built litter pickers. They are simple to operate and come in two sizes adults and children's.

These can be provided by Boston Borough Council (contact environmental operations 01205 314200) along with high visibility vests and gloves.

Alternatively litter pickers and the other equipment can be purchased quite cheaply via the internet.



Safe working practice

Use the purpose built/ designed litter pickers and:-

- Always wear gloves as they will protect your hands i.e. blisters, cuts, grazes, etc and prevent contact with contamination/ contaminated items
- Make sure you keep your hands and body warm especially when working in windy, wet or cold conditions
- Keep the body in an upright position and avoid bending sideways, twisting, stooping or overstretching
- Do not allow body to become tense and regularly – change body position, hands, speed and relax grip
- Find the best way of working for you
- Know when you need a break/rest

When filling bags, containers, wheelie bins etc limit the amount collected & contained in each to prevent them becoming heavy and difficult to move.

When filling bags do not overfill them as they will become hard to secure and might burst.

Litter picking by hand

If unable to use litter pickers due to obstructions or the size and nature of waste materials always wear heavy duty gloves and before you start collecting complete a visual check to identify any potential hazards like glass or sharps.

If there is glass or sharps amongst the waste then due to the associated risks litter picking by hand must not be prohibited.

Litter picking – good technique

When undertaking litter picking activities to minimise risk always wear gloves, use a good technique, use litter pickers and never make direct contact with a 'sharp' or any potential source of contamination.

- Maximise mobility – carry bag in the opposite hand to the litter pickers
- Prevent fatigue – placed the bag on the ground adjacent to the collection area
- Two persons – carry bag between you

Due to the associated risks you are not authorised to collect discarded 'sharps'. If any 'sharps' are identified whilst you are litter picking/collecting stop activities, contact Boston Borough Council environmental operations team and arrange for them to be removed before re-commencing activities.

If leaving them in situ could potentially place persons at 'risk', either secure the area or display signed to prevent access.

Sources of contamination

Contact with any of the following could potentially expose you to various medical conditions including TB, Hep B, HIV & Aids:-

- Blood and bodily fluids (spittle, urine, faeces, vomit, etc)
- Contaminated items – hypodermic needles, medical waste, tissues, sanitary towels, etc

To minimise risk: -

Use the correct procedure for removal/containment of 'sharps' (see above) and keep inoculations up to date, cover open wounds, wear gloves and practice good hygiene (sanitise or wash hands frequently).

If you inadvertently make contact then treat the contamination/injury immediately (see below) and seek medical assistance.

Sharp/puncture: – encourage bleeding and clean the site (soap or antibacterial gel)



Bodily fluid:-

- Broken skin – encourage bleeding and wash (do not scrub)
- Eyes or mouth – irrigate with cold water

Tetanus and weils disease

Two serious conditions that you can be exposed too in external environments are tetanus and weils disease both of these are potentially life threatening. The possible sources of contamination are as follows:-

Tetanus:-

- Mud, shrubs, plants and garden cuttings
- Cattle, sheep and horses
- Rust, agricultural and gardening equipment

Weils disease:-

- Rats, habitats and food sources
- Water sources – sewers, ditches, rivers, drains, etc

The risk of contracting one of these is minimal if you keep inoculations up to date, cover open wounds, wear gloves and practice good hygiene.

Litter picking - physical implications

Litter picking requires a considerable amount of manual handling (lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling) and concentrated physical effort. It also involves bending, stretching and the need to complete repetitive type tasks/ actions. To minimise the risk to yourself it is essential that these activities are undertaken in a safe manner.

Bending and stretching – allow yourself time to get accustomed to this and initially do not over exert yourself. It is important to know your physical limitations and keep within them.

Manual handling - before starting any lift (no matter how small) THINK and plan the lift. What is the load? Is it big, small, awkward? Where is it going? Are there any obstructions in the way?

Subconsciously you do this every time you lift something but to reduce risk you need to take an extra second or two to do it consciously.

Face the direction of travel, adopt a stable position (boxers stance) placing feet alongside the load if lifting from ground level.

Bend the knees to reach the load, use a firm grip to secure and hold as close to the body as possible. When you start to lift the load use your legs to bear the weight and complete the lift in one smooth movement.

Jerking must be avoided and so must any twisting or rotating movement as this puts unacceptable pressures onto the spine and could potentially subject it to short or long term damage.

When walking with a load it is important to keep your head up looking forwards DO NOT look down at the load.

Remember that there is no such thing as a completely safe manual handling activity nor is there a safe weight that any one person can lift.

Everybody is different – know your limitations!

Undertaking repetitive activities like litter picking can lead to muscular skeletal issues especially as we get older.

There are some simple rules that can be followed to protect yourself:-

- Find the best way of working (for you)
- Use the correct tool for the job and do not over grip
- Regularly rest muscle load by changing hands, speed and relaxing grip or alternatively changing activity
- Change body position
- Take regular breaks when undertaking repetitive work
- Know when you need a break

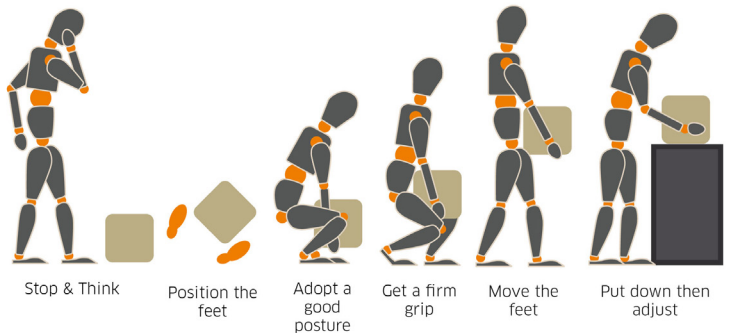
Handling bagged waste

When handling bagged waste there is the potential for a musculoskeletal injury and the risk is increased if:-

- More than two bags are carried
- Load weight not distributed evenly – bag or bags carried to one side
- Carrying distance (10 metres) is exceeded

Handling bagged waste – safe working practice:

- Wear gloves and avoid direct contact – touching and pushing bags
- Secure contents – tie at the top
- Handle carefully – prevents splits, tears and spillages
- Loading – place in position and keep top accessible for lifting
- Don't throw or drop – as bag might spilt or burst
- Don't compact – press down with hands or knees



- Before lifting – check weight and security of contents
- Lift and hold by tied top – carry away from your body
- Do not swing bags and avoid making contact with others
- Carry independently – not with other items

If available to minimise risk transport bags in a wheelie bin.

Sunshine

Exposure to the sun without the use of protection can have consequences which can range from sunburn (uncomfortable, irritating to severe burns) and ultimately to skin cancer.

When working outside on a sunny or bright day apply sunscreen to all exposed skin surfaces and reapply in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Working in the heat can also result in dehydration and cause sun stroke so keep yourself hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.

If possible wear light coloured clothing that reflects the sunlight and a hat to protect your head. To protect the back of the neck wear a light weight scarf or high collared top

Remember exposure is not just possible on sunny days it can occur when there is hazy conditions or broken cloud and especially if it is windy as well as sunny.

Clothing, insects and plants

Wear clothing that allows freedom of movement which is resilient and that will protect you from cuts and abrasions. Clothing will become contaminated and so needs to be washable.

Footwear must be resilient, damp proof and encase/support the foot. Sandals or open toe footwear is not suitable for these activities. If working near or adjacent to a highway or an area subject to traffic movements wear a high visibility vest/clothing.

When selecting your clothing be mindful that some particular coloured clothing will attract insects:-

Mosquitoes', midges, gnats, etc are attracted by yellow and turquoise blue

Wasp, bees, rape flies and thunder bugs are attracted by bright yellow

When working in the open you can expect to encounter insect life and some of these insects can inflict significant stings or bites which if they become infected could lead to blood poisoning.

It is recommended that when insects are particularly active that you apply insect repellent. In addition, if you receive a sting or bite always clean and treat the wound.

In any green area there is always the potential to come into contact with weeds that are either toxic, that sting or that are poisonous – nettles, thistles, giant hogweed, cow parsley, poison ivy, deadly nightshade, ragwort, hemlock, etc

To minimise any risk to yourself when litter picking always treat all plants and weeds with caution and follow safe working practices.

General safety information

When undertaking activities in an 'external environment' please remain alert at all times as there is always the potential for other team members or members of the public to enter the area you are working in.

In addition, un-accompanied dogs can disrupt activities and be potentially hazardous.

Always check an area before commencing activities, remain alert to the potential for contact with a sharp object (needles, glass, etc) and stop activities if a hazardous condition arises – dog, pedestrians, etc

Fly swat team – hazardous items

When collecting litter and clearing areas you will come across other discarded items i.e. asbestos, chemicals, mattresses, electrical goods, builders/garden waste etc, these will need to be collected either by a specialist contactor or the Boston Borough Council's Fly Swat Team. To enable them to be collected safely and disposed of in the appropriate manner please contact Boston Borough Council on 01205 314200.

Due to the potential risks –

- Never feel tempted to investigate or deal with items outside your remit i.e. general litter/waste
- Never feel tempted to investigate the contents of bags, boxes, containers or place your hands in them
- Never touch or move soft furnishings, furniture, mattresses, etc – as they can conceal sharps (syringes)
- If in doubt about any item ere on the side of caution.

LITTER CHAMPION APPLICATION FORM

Name

Address

.....

Contact Number

Email Date

Please provide details of the exact location(s) you wish to clean up

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Please provide details on how you are going to dispose of the waste collected e.g. (arrangement with BBC)

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If arrangement made with BBC where will the waste be left for collection

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Equipment

Please tick the amount of equipment required

	Quantity
Hi-viz waistcoat	
Litter pickers	
Gloves	