

## Weil's Disease

A potential waterway health hazard is Weil's Disease, which is sometimes associated with contact with untreated water. Weil's Disease (also known as leptospirosis) may be found around the waterways. Useful things to know:

- the infection can enter through broken skin or the mucous membrane, by inoculation (e.g. animal bites), by handling infected animals, or by inhaling aerosolised leptospire (the bacteria causing the disease)
- seek medical consultation immediately if you are not feeling well
- symptoms vary but include flu-like illness, meningitis and more serious cases can include liver damage and kidney failure
- average incubation period is about 10 days, but can be anything from 4 to 19 days. However, following illness, immunity lasts for years
- you can reduce your chance of being contaminated by wearing protective clothing, covering up cuts and grazes, washing hands before eating and taking other sensible, basic health and hygiene precautions.

## Personal Protection

You should always wear the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This may include safety goggles, work gloves, safety boots and life jackets and it must always be used for your own safety. We ask that you, work sensibly and use common sense at all times to prevent any injuries and promote a safe working environment for you and for those around you.

For certain work, such as construction or when there is potentially a danger of falling objects, a safety helmet will be provided. These must be worn at all times in the interest of safety to prevent head injuries.

Please remember that PPE is the last line of defence and you should always take precautions to prevent certain injuries or health-related problems. Dependent on the type of work you are doing you may be provided with other PPE not listed here. You will be told before you begin work what is provided for you.

## Health

### Don't smoke whilst on a task.

Those working around the waterways and the countryside are advised to take precautions for potential health risks.

- it is strongly recommended that you have an up-to-date tetanus jab
- ticks are common in some areas and you are advised to cover up when working around vegetation to avoid being bitten. Some ticks may carry Lyme Disease, which may cause flu-like symptoms and/or enlarged glands
- in some areas, there may be toxic waste (such as dog waste). You are advised to take extra care, avoid contact with the waste and if you do come into contact with it, wash thoroughly
- if you are on medication or have any allergies, please inform your task manager
- consult a doctor immediately if you are feeling unwell

**Ensure that you have completed a registration form and always sign in**

## COSHH

COSHH stands for Control of **Substances Hazardous to Health**. If you are using fuel, glues, paints etc., you will be supplied with a COSHH sheet telling you how dangerous the material is and how it should be applied and handled.

## Are you fit enough?

Whilst practical volunteer tasks are a great way to get fit, we want to ensure that you're fit enough to do them. Please tell your task manager beforehand of any health conditions that they need to know about and speak to them if at any point you feel that the work is getting too heavy. There's nothing wrong with a rest or a change.

**Thank you for volunteering safely with the Canal & River Trust**

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[canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteering](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteering)

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Canal &  
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# Volunteer safety information



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**Contact:** Paul Deacon  
Tel: 01777 700 555 ©55 DESIGN LTD 2014

# Being safe helps you have a better time

When working alongside Canal & River Trust, you should, in your own interests and that of your colleagues, observe health and safety standards. This guide provides you with some basic health and safety tips when working around the waterways.



## Thank You for Volunteering with the Canal & River Trust

This leaflet gives you an idea of some of the safety issues you may face. Before your task begins, you will be given an induction, and your induction will include a health and safety section. This will prepare you if something goes wrong. If you have any queries, speak with your task manager. If an incident occurs, don't put yourself in danger and don't move the injured person unless they are at risk of immediate danger. Then:

- find your nearest first aider
- call 999 if appropriate
- you must report the accident or illness as soon as possible to your task manager

If it is out of hours, call our 24 hours emergency free phone service on 0800 47 999 47. Before you begin work, you will be told about your designated first aiders and where to seek first aid kits.

## Accident Reporting and Near Misses

All accidents must be reported however trivial they may seem. It is also important to report accidents that nearly happened.

## Lifting and Carrying

Lifting and handling loads incorrectly can cause back pain which if continually done incorrectly, can become long term back problems. It is advised that you use equipment or machines when necessary to lift and handle heavy objects when possible, for example sack trucks or wheelbarrows. However, sometimes it may be necessary to manually handle heavy objects.

- if necessary, request assistance to reduce the load
- make sure that once you have lifted the load, you have a clear path with no obstacles and a clear view over the object
- if you have an obstructed view or your path has potential hazards, seek assistance in helping you move the object



## Working by Water

The key message to remember when working by water is Stay Away From the Edge (SAFE). However, if working in or by water, make sure you are wearing your provided life jacket if you have been told to. Make sure that you know where the rescue equipment is and that you know how to use it before you begin work. You will be told if you need to wear a life jacket.

## Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are the most common accident around the waterways. They can be caused by inappropriate footwear, a person being distracted and not watching where they are going or simply by tools and materials being put in the wrong place. Key things to remember are:

- heed the instructions of the risk assessment and any stipulation on footwear. Even if safety boots or waders are not required, solid footwear with good grip and ankle support are the best option
- make sure that the task area is clear and tidy (no uncovered cables, tools stored in the correct place, holes are covered or clearly marked). If you see a hazard, don't wait for someone else to deal with it but do it yourself, if you can do it safely
- focus on the task in hand and try not to do two things at once i.e. stop walking when taking a photograph or using a mobile phone

Some areas around the waterways may have unpredictable surfaces; for example towpaths may have unstable edges next to the waterways or soft patches becoming wet and slippery after bad weather. You should take extra care when working in potentially unstable areas. These will be highlighted before you begin work. If working on a slope, be aware that it may be slippery. If you are working with tools, make sure you leave the tools on a flat surface to reduce the risk of falling and injuring someone below you.

## Working Conditions

We advise you to wear suitable clothing for the weather conditions in which you're volunteering:

- in cold, wet or windy weather, wear clothing to keep you warm and dry
- in hot, sunny weather wear light protective clothing to avoid heatstroke. Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and take regular breaks especially if doing exhausting work. Seek shade where possible; wear a sun hat and use the relevant sun protection cream

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