

North York Moors National Park Authority Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

3 February 2020

Health and Safety

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on health and safety activity so far during 2019/20 and on progress made on the health and safety work programme.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the March 2019 NPA meeting, Members agreed the health and safety work programme for the coming year. The purpose of the regular papers to this Committee is to update Members on progress made on the work programme, review accident/near miss information and to raise other health and safety matters.

3. Accidents and Near Misses 2019/20

- 3.1 At the time of writing this report a total of 25 accidents to staff/volunteers have been reported since 1 April. The corresponding figure for 2018/19 was 22 accidents. One accident has resulted in lost time and this is explained in greater detail below. The majority of accidents were minor in their nature, involving manual handling, slips, trips or minor cuts. 13 of the 25 accidents were minor injuries to volunteers which occurred while carrying out practical work tasks.
- 3.2 A further 10 accident reports have been received with regard to visitors to one of our sites. 5 of these relate to students engaging with activities organised by the Education and Youth Engagement Team. All were minor in their nature and required no further action. The remaining 5 reports involve visitors to our car parks or visitor centres.
- 3.3 During the same period, 12 near misses were reported. All have been followed up and appropriate action taken as a result.
- 3.4 Two accidents merit further mention in this report. In the first incident, an apprentice was working with others on site and was moving a piece of timber from one of the Authority's trailers (which had been used to transport materials to site) to a trailer belonging to a farmer who was then transporting materials to the work site. The apprentice's grip on the timber that he was holding slipped and his finger was trapped between the wood and the edge of the trailer. Although the resulting injury was not serious, it did require minor surgery to repair soft tissue damage and the apprentice concerned was unable to undertake practical work for 3 weeks. The incident was reported to HSE as required by RIDDOR, but nothing further has been heard. The incident was investigated and while it was found that there was 'no fault' on behalf of the individual or the task supervisor, it did highlight the need to minimize manual handling operations as a way of reducing accidents (see paragraph 5.1).

- 3.5 In the second incident, an apprentice using a hedge cutter, on a site with a slope, cut their knee. The sloping nature of the site had resulted in the apprentice sticking their leg out to balance and they had caught their knee while completing a cutting sweep.
- 3.6 While the injury was not significant, it did require hospital treatment, but there was no lost work time. The investigation established that the apprentice had been given clear instruction on how to use the equipment, the task had been properly risk assessed and appropriate PPE was being worn.

4. **Other Health and Safety Activity**

- 4.1 The incidents mentioned in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 highlighted a lack of consistency of approach in investigating the causes and the conclusions that should be drawn from more serious accidents. The result of this has been the development of a simple form which requires line managers to answer a series of questions to ensure that information is gathered in a consistent way and a thorough investigation is undertaken.
- 4.2 As members may be aware, the Authority has had a policy for a number of years to help manage the risk posed by trees on Authority owned land. The Woodland Officer has recently organised a short review of this policy and a session with those responsible for property to remind them of their responsibilities to regularly inspect trees and keep a record of the inspections. While trees in public areas provide a significant enhancement, the small inherent risk is managed by being able to demonstrate an adequate inspection and management regime if there is an incident.
- 4.3 One of the Apprentice Rangers has undertaken a piece of work to improve record keeping for powered equipment that can cause hand-arm vibration issues. The Head of Recreation and Ranger Services is ensuring that all equipment that can meet the maximum daily exposure limit within 8 hours of use is properly tagged to ensure that users take sufficient breaks. All staff who regularly use vibrating machinery undertake occupational health checks to ensure that they are not developing the early signs of hand arm vibration health related conditions.
- 4.4 One of the Authority's mental health first aiders has undertaken additional training, with specific focus on young people, and their contact details have been publicised to the apprentices as an initial point of contact if they feel that they are struggling with their mental health.

5. **Progress on the 2019/20 Health and Safety Action Plan**

- 5.1 The focus of work for the Health and Safety Group each year is the Health and Safety Action Plan approved by Members. Please see below for a summary of progress made to date;

- Developing a consistent approach to driver training with an accompanying policy;

A trial tracking system was fitted to one of the pool cars to provide data about driver safety with regard to speed, braking and cornering. The system proved to need considerable administrative input to transfer the data to multiple drivers of the same vehicle and Officers took the view that the benefits did not outweigh the costs.

An alternative one to one approach to driver training has been adopted instead with the first training taking place in February and further training booked at regular intervals throughout the year. First priority is being given to those who are allocated Authority vehicles, with the most regular users of pool vehicles being the next priority.

- Ensuring that lifting and moving training is more appropriate and effective;

A large amount of the practical work that staff/volunteers undertake requires some form of manual handling of equipment or materials. Traditionally, the approach of most organisations has been to train its staff in how to lift properly and safely. While this continues to be important, the Ranger team are due to take part in training in how to consider ways of avoiding significant manual handling tasks, such as moving bridge beams to site etc. This will be delivered by colleagues from NYCC's Health and Safety team in February;

- Developing a formal register of relevant health and safety legislation and stating (briefly) how the Authority is complying with it;

Information has been gathered for this piece of work and Officers anticipate a draft being ready for members to consider at NPA in March.

- Organising appropriate health and safety refresher training for members;

This is included in the Members' training programme for 2019/20. Unfortunately, the session due for October was postponed, but will be rearranged for the spring of 2020 together with a specific briefing on their health and safety responsibilities for the Authority Chair and Chair of FRASC.

- Consider updating the format used for risk assessments to make them more effective and more easily usable;

The risk assessment format that the Authority uses has been changed to reflect current best practice. As part of this change process, staff who are involved in producing and updating risk assessments have taken part in training to go through the revised format which applies to both generic and site specific risk assessments;

- Continue to focus on developing health and safety training for those who lead volunteers.

Staff in the Volunteering Team continue to undertake supportive spot checking of task day leaders (staff and volunteers) and walk leaders to ensure that safety briefings are undertaken to the required standard. Newly trained task day leaders are spot checked as a priority. Task day leader training and refreshers continue to emphasise the health and safety aspects of the role. The CEO and Head of Corporate Services have carried out an in depth spot check of the operation of risk assessments for Task Day Leader (TDL) tasks (mainly, but not all, volunteers). All 15 tasks were documented but one repeat user of the system was not supplying sufficient task specific information. This has been chased up and the role of the Volunteering Service in being responsible for ensuring that all documentation is in place has been strengthened.

6. Initial Thoughts for 2020/21 Action Plan

- 6.1 The draft action plan will be brought to March NPA for members' approval. Officers' initial thoughts are that the action plan will include;

- Assess Corporate Health and Safety Performance using the LGA matrix and take actions as appropriate (next assessment Oct 2020).
- Assess the effectiveness of volunteer TDL training by; a) organising regular meetings of TDLs with health & safety as an agenda item; b) regular spot checking of activities which are led by TDLs; c) develop (by 31 May) and implement a timetable for the above 2 activities.

- Develop and implement a programme of communication on health and safety matters for volunteers, using a variety of different communication methods (plan to be developed by 31 May, implementation then ongoing).

6.2 Members' views on these or any other items they feel should be included are very welcome.

7. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

7.1 There are no significant additional financial or staff issues related to the contents of this report. Budgetary provision is sufficient to pay for all appropriate Health and Safety training and personal protective equipment.

8. **Recommendation**

8.1 That Members;

- Comment on the proposed Health and Safety Action Plan for 2020/21; and
- Note the work undertaken since the last FRASC meeting.

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Background documents to this report

File ref.

NPA Reports, December 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019
FRASC Reports 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019