

# ANGEL COMMUNITY CANAL BOAT TRUST



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## VOLUNTEERS - HEALTH, SAFETY AND RISK

Carrying out maintenance on a canal boat, on a mooring, in dry dock or in wet dock gives rise to a number of risks of injury. We will do what we can to minimise such risks, but it is essential that you also TAKE CARE AT ALL TIMES and ASK FOR ADVICE if at any time you are uncertain about anything you are doing.

Prior to your starting we have carried out a risk assessment to identify the potential dangers. When we are working on someone else's facilities – as in dry or wet dock – we have only limited control over the site, and we will warn you of the risks of which we are aware and how they can be minimised.

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF with the location, the principal routes through the site and for access onto the boat, and know who the skipper is (he is in overall charge) and who else is in charge of the volunteer work.

You must at all times ENGAGE COMMON SENSE and BE ON THE OUTLOOK FOR POTENTIAL DANGER.

WE WILL LOOK AFTER YOU, BUT YOU MUST ALSO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AND RECOGNISE THAT THERE ARE POTENTIAL DANGERS WHICH WE MUST ALL AVOID. NEVER HURRY!

We will:

- give you a clear statement as to who has responsibility for what
- appoint an appropriate competent person or persons on site
- communicate to you health and safety matters
- give appropriate instruction, training and supervision
- keep the situation under review.

Whilst engaged in any activity and while at a boatyard or dock volunteer workers and visitors are urged in their own interest and that of their colleagues to observe health and safety standards and in no way to jeopardise the high standards required by ACCT. Full co-operation and communication throughout the organisation, whether on site or otherwise, must therefore be maintained. Any matter which those participating in any activity consider may be a danger to either health or safety should be brought to the notice of their supervisor at the earliest opportunity.



REPORT any injury (however trivial) and any near-misses, so we can learn from them.

Obviously there are many new risks for volunteers on site. The ones listed below are highlighted as a new volunteer may not have encountered them before.

**Tripping:** There are various potential tripping hazards around the site, which is a working environment. Some docks were built in the time of the industrial revolution, with various adaptations since. As a result standards are unlikely to be 21<sup>st</sup> century. Never hurry and watch where you put your feet.

**Access to the boat:** Access will either be via a plank or by stepping off the edge onto the boat. Wherever possible ensure that you have a firm handhold or two at all times in case you misplace a foot.

**The water itself:** Many volunteers will not be used to working near water or from a height and very few will be used to working from a boat. When working on or near water we must all:

- take steps to prevent people from falling into water so far as is reasonably practical; and
- ensure that personal protective and rescue equipment is immediately available for use and maintained, in the event of a fall.

**Pollution:** Although canals are unlikely to contain untreated sewage or commercial or agricultural spillages, a stretch of urban canal or canal near industrial areas can be polluted, and there is always the possibility of dead animals and discarded hypodermic needles being present. Be sensible and careful.

**Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis):** Weil's Disease is a serious, and sometimes even fatal, infection that is transmitted to humans by contact with the urine of infected rats (which may frequently contaminate canal banks and water at work sites). The infection enters the body through breaks in the skin or via the lining of the mouth, nose or eyes. The following preventative measures should be applied:

- All cuts and broken skin must be covered with waterproof plasters and/or gloves.
- Hands should be washed thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking.
- Contaminated clothing (overalls etc.) should be removed before entering food preparation or eating areas.

The disease starts with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache. Anyone experiencing these symptoms up to three weeks after being in contact with canal or river water MUST draw the fact to their doctor's attention. The disease is cured in the early stages by antibiotics.

**Tetanus:** All volunteers are advised to be immunised against tetanus, which can be contacted even via trivial wounds.

**Fatigue and musculoskeletal problems:** Many volunteers will not be used to the potential hard work of boat maintenance. Do not overreach yourself. Whilst this often only leads to aches and pains the following day the potential



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for serious long-term damage exists. Do not overdo it in a desire to finish a task.

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I have received and read this sheet:

Signed .....

Dated .....

Name .....