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| **Activity:** | Knife, Axe and Saw Work | **Location:** | HQ and Off-Site | **Last review date:** | December 2022 | **Produced by:** | Alex Windows (Section Leader) |
| **Next review date:** | December 2025 | **Quality Assured by:** |  |

* TSA Knife Safety Guidance - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safety/keeping-safe-at-camp/scout-knife-safety-guidance>
* TSA Using Axes and Saws Safely - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safety/keeping-safe-at-camp/using-axe-and-saws-safely>

| **What are the hazards?** | **What are the risks?** | **Who is most at risk?** | **What control measures will be put in place?** |
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| **Knives** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People. | * All knives should be handed to a leader upon arrival, so young people cannot access them when unsupervised. * Activities involving knives should be supervised by a competent leader, with previous experience, * A leader should explain knife law and safety as part of the activity. * At the end of the activity session, collect all sharp objects and have a suitable, safe storage area. * All knives and other sharp equipment must be stored away, out of access from young people.   **Scouts that have shown competence in using a knife, axe and saw and completed their ‘theory’ assessment with a leader may be given their KAS license. This allows them to use knives, axes and saws without the direct supervision of a leader. They must still ask before using any of these and have a specific purpose. They will adhere to all other parts of this risk assessment.** |
| **Using Knives/Technique** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People/Inexperienced Persons. | * Young people should start with a small knife (such as a Swiss Army Knife) and complete simple tasks, before building up to more complex tasks with a larger blade as they become more confident and dexterous. * Young people should be shown by an adult leader how to correctly use sharp equipment properly, including: * Correct stance – knelt but upright to avoid contact with lower legs or seated cutting to one side or between legs. * Always cut away – move the blade away from yourself when cutting, never cut towards. * Space – ensure everyone has enough space around them to avoid contact with other people. Leaders should check and space them out as necessary. * Leaders should pay close attention to young people who are new to using sharp tools to ensure that their technique is correct and safe. |
| **Moving with/Passing Knives** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People/Inexperienced Persons. | * Leaders should brief young people on how to take a knife out of its sheath or unfold it safely, keeping fingers away from the blade. * Knives should be folded away or sheaved when being carried or transferred from person to person. * Where passing a knife does not involve the person standing or otherwise moving themselves, it may be acceptable to pass the knife with the blade exposed. Leaders will brief young people on the correct way of doing this. |
| **Axes and Saws** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | All. | * The axe should be inspected before use. It should not be used if the head and handle do not line up or if the head is loose. * Do not use a blunt blade. * Axes and saws should be sheaved when not in use. * Activities involving axes or saws should be supervised by a competent leader, with previous experience, * A leader should explain axe safety as part of the activity. * At the end of the activity session, collect all sharp objects and have a suitable, safe storage area. |
| **Using Axes and Saws (Technique)** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People/Inexperienced Persons. | * Create a safe cutting area when using axes and saws, a chopping area must be marked appropriately to the size of the axe or saw. * The chopping area should only be entered by the person using the axe or saw. * Young people should wear goggles when using axes and saws. * Chopping blocks placed below cutting wood should be used to avoid damage to other surfaces. * Young people should use a kneeling position at first, keeping their legs out of the way of the axe motion. More experienced persons may progress to standing positions when they have demonstrated competence. * When using the axe, young people should be advised never to use their hands/fingers to hold wood that is being cut. Instead, use another stick to hold it up. * Do not wear scarves, ties, lanyards, neckers etc. or any loose clothing or jewellery and tie back long hair to prevent axes from getting caught or pulling. |
| **Moving with/passing Axes and Saws** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People/Inexperienced Persons. | * Leaders should show young people how to carry axes properly: in hand with the arm by your side, the axe blade facing forward, and fingers behind the blade. * Mask the axe or saw (cover the blade) before carrying or storing. * If you need to pass the axe to someone else, stand side by side facing the same direction. Pass the head of the axe first. |
| **Wood** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | All. | * Young people must take extra care when carrying or handling wood – they should be advised not to run or wave it around. * Wear goggles when cutting wood. * Thick gloves could be worn when handling rough or sharp wood. * Young people should be advised to exercise caution around wood that may contain nails or other sharps. |
| **Visibility** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | All. | * When visibility is low, e.g., when dark, additional lighting should be provided. * Young people could be advised to bring a head torch to wear when completing activities in low visibility. |
| **Behaviour** | Cuts, impalement, damage to equipment, loss of limb - to self or other people. | Young People. | * Set clear expectations of behaviour. * Stress the importance of being responsible when using sharp tools. * Supervise young people closely while they use sharp items. Continue to assess their competence. * Have one adult or young leader for each group – consider the ratio depending on age and behaviour. * Count out the sharp items and be clear on how many are being used. Count them back in to make sure they are all returned. |