

### Risk Assessment: Axe & Hatchet

Venue	Rewilding Adventure Site, Dunsdale	Completed by:	Morgan Lax	Date:	14th April 2025	Review Date:	14th April 2027		
<b>Description of site / activity / tools:</b>  The forest axe is the archetypal tool of the bushcrafter, yet it presents several significant risks. There is a balance to be struck between the need of using the tool, the skills of the user, the possibility of substituting the toll for something else and the outcome that will be achieved. When discussing axes, this risk assessment considers three different types: the forest axe for felling and splitting (such as a specialist Gransfors Bruks), a hand hatchet (such as the Hultafors Classic for carving) and the small splitting axe (a Wilkinson Sword splitting hatchet). These range in the hone of the blade, the weight of the head and the length of the handle- although all are axes, some pose a greater rsk than others. This risk assessment combines the use of all three types of axe.									
	Hazard	Harm	People at Risk	Existing Control Measure	Likelihood (1-3)	Severity (1-3)	Rating LxS (1-9)	New Control Measure Who? When?	Comments
1.	Carrying the axe	Cutting self/ another	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tool talk</li><li>• Verbal warning of the risk</li><li>• Carry by the neck, blade down</li><li>• Carry with sheath in place (for honed axes)</li><li>• Clear undemanding terrain route</li><li>• If carried for a distance than it is to be placed in/onto a bag</li></ul>	1	2	2		
2.	Collecting, unsheathing/ sheathing	Cut	User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tool talk &amp; demonstration</li><li>• Verbal warning of the risk</li><li>• Stored with sheath attached</li></ul>	1	2	2		The wearing of gloves is possible, however the remaining use of the axe does not necessitate the wearing of gloves. The blade can be avoided with ungloved hands
3.	Striking leg/body	Cut	User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tool talk &amp; demonstration</li><li>• Verbal warning of the risk</li><li>• Avoid using axe as a hammer (thereby avoiding blade to body)</li><li>• Use with a chopping block or bowl mule (if carving); work piece placed on opposite side of block/mule</li><li>• Log placed between legs and strike through (if splitting)</li><li>• Use with a small participant to instructor ratio (suggest 1:4), with only one or two axes hatchets being</li></ul>	2	3	6		

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used until safe use is established</li> <li>Only used with trusted and <i>tool experience</i> groups</li> </ul>					
4.	Striking holding hand	Cut/ digital amputation	User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tool talk &amp; demonstration</li> <li>Verbal warning of the risk- this is emphasised</li> <li>Safe cutting/carving techniques explained/demonstrated</li> <li>Ensure work piece is stable on bowl mule/stump</li> <li>Wearing of glove on helper hand advised</li> <li>Use with a small participant to instructor ratio (suggest 1:4), with only one or two axes hatchets being used until safe use is established</li> <li>Only used with trusted and <i>tool experience</i> groups</li> <li>User to concentrate on the task, no conversations during use</li> </ul>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the use of buddying- the observing buddy is to advise of safety</li> </ul>	The wearing of a glove will provide some/minimal protection from an axe strike; however, it is likely to be effective against glancing strikes.
5.	Striking another	Cut/ digital amputation	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tool talk &amp; demonstration</li> <li>Verbal warning of the risk</li> <li>One arm and a tool use</li> <li>User is responsible for stopping when safe area is breached</li> <li>Group are responsible for staying out of this area</li> </ul>	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider marking the safe area around mule/block</li> <li></li> </ul>	
6.	Sharpening	Cut	User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors to routinely sharpen the tools</li> <li>Sharpening may be undertaken with adult groups; verbal warning given</li> <li>Sharpen as per training/instructed by qualified instructor</li> </ul>	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	
7.	Felled limb/ tree falling	Crush injury, bruising becoming trapped	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Felling a tree with an axe is to be avoided (use of a bow saw is preferable)</li> <li></li> </ul>	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If this is done more in the future then the use of hard hats, high vis vests and cordons will be considered</li> </ul>	
8.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					
9.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					

10.				•					
11.				•					
12.				•					
<b>Comments/Concerns:</b>  This risk assessment will be reviewed in the event of any incident or near miss in order to be fully informed for the future. It is not an exhaustive list, and is written with experience of FS and bushcraft activities in mind and the incidents (or lack of) that have been encounter in the preceding 7 years.					<b>Recommendations:</b>  For bi-annual review- due March 2027				