

Risk Assessment: Axe throwing

Venue	Rewilding Adventure Site, Dunsdale	Completed by:	Morgan Lax	Date:	14th April 2025	Review Date:	14th April 2027
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Description of site / activity / tools:

A small-scale activity for a circa 12 people (maximum pragmatic number) to throw tomahawk, mousehawk axes and throwing angels at specific wooden targets as part of an activity programme or as a discreet session. The activity takes place at a specifically designed and laid out range for target activities- including archery and axe throwing. The range has been located at the end of the activity area where there is no natural pathway and the woodland is not open to the public.

	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.	Handling axes	Cutting self-on the axe head	All involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Axes are not honed to a sharp edge- it is unlikely that this would occur Regular maintenance/inspection of the axes undertaken to ensure that there are no burrs on the axe heads to cause a cut First aid kit carried Verbal warning 	1	1	1		
2.	Person entering the throwing area	Struck by thrown axe-cut/bruise.	Participant, Instructor and Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instruction regarding waiting and throwing areas "Stop" command explained and used by all involved Range captain identified to all involved- Field captain has overall responsibility for who/when the throwing area and target area can be entered Verbal command to Collect given by Field Captain Range located at the end of the activity area- as such is not a through-fair Range is bordered by a steep bank to the left and river bank to the left Rear of range is difficult to access so prevents any person unrelated to the activity entering the activity area 	1	2	2		The site and level of use means that it is highly unlikely that any other person other than the group engaged in the activity will be in this area.

				(this is highly unlikely) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of the activity means that the ability to throw an axe to a distance greater than 15m with any significant power is unlikely 					
3.	Axe/axe head bouncing from target	Struck by bouncing axe	Participants (throwing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum distance from target maintained through use of a throwing line • Targets are wooden and as such are likely to absorb the impact • Wooden targets are manufactured in such a way as to allow the grain of the wood to open and accept the axe head, rather than resisting the impact 	1	1	1		
4.	Observer hit by thrown axe	Impact injury/cut/bruise	Observer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning regarding the direction of axes to be thrown/only thrown at the targets • Participants will be verbally warned if their behaviour become dangerous and may be removed from the activity • Specific and physically barriered waiting area- only two people to throw at a time • Stop command used if instructors notice a person not involved in the activity observing the activity in a location that poses a risk • All observers invited into the waiting/observing area- even if they are not involved in the activity (unless, subject to a dynamic risk assessment, instructors are satisfied that the observers are a sufficiently safe distance from the range- for instance: at the top of the hill to the left of the range and towards the observing area). 	1	2	2		
5.	Target falling on participant when retrieving axes	Bruising/crush injuries	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets are either secured to the ground via cord, or have a hinged stand • Dynamic assessment made of wind conditions- unlikely that a target would be blown onto participant 	1	1	1		

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration and explanation of how to remove axes from target board • Young participants accompanied/assisted • <i>Stuck</i> axes removed by instructor 					
6.	Splintered/damaged axe shaft	Cuts/splinters to participants' hands	Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and ongoing inspection • Participants informed of possible splinters • Use of sandpaper/tape to cover splintered handles • Handles replaced if cannot be repaired (spare handles included in kit) • First aid kit carried 	1	1	1		
7.	Struck by axe swing during throwing	Impact injury, cut or bruise	Participant /observer/ instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of two participants throwing at a time • Sufficient space between participants to avoid being struck • Instructor to stand at side of throwers • Sufficient distance between throwing line and observing area • Observing area separated from throwing area by a physical barrier at waist height • Correct efficient and controlled throwing technique demonstrated (this significantly reduces the risk) • Instructor to be watchful of dangerous technique and intervene 	1	2	2		
8.	Axe head sliding down shaft	Pain/ minor cut or blood blister	Participant instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning to participants • Block available to <i>tamp</i> loose heads back to a secure location • Axes carried head down (axe heads will naturally fall back into correct position- reducing the risk of them sliding down the shaft) • Instructors being mindful of loose heads (they can be heard easily!) 	1	1	1		
9.	Presence of throwing line and stumps	Trip or fall	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence and purpose of these is brought to the attention of the participants during the briefing • The throwing line kept as low as possible to the ground, but is 	1	2	2		Both the throwing line and stump are present for safety reasons, and the benefits of them far outweighs the risk

				secured to prevent movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stumps are positioned to the side of the throwing lane, so as to allow axes to be lent against them • The range is located in a location in the woods where participants have to enter and walk on uneven pathways, so the possibility of trip hazards will be in their awareness 					
10.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 					
Comments/Concerns: 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 8 years.					Recommendations: For bi-annual review- due March 2027				