

PAJERO 4WD CLUB of Victoria
RURAL RESPONSE GROUP
SAFETY ADVICE FOR VOLUNTEERS

As with any 4WD activity, assessing the risk of the task at hand is vitally important.

If we arrive at a difficult bit of track, we get out of the vehicles,

- We look at it
- Discuss it on the track
- Discuss it at the bottom of the track
- Discuss it at the top of the track
- Navigate the obstacle

Please do the same with your team for any task to be carried out in Rural Response work.

Be thorough, spend time to look at all jobs to be carried out, never assume the job is straightforward.

What may seem easy to some, may not appear so easy to others; we have a very broad range of skills in the club, and so we must look out for each other.

Make yourself aware of any risks or issues you see, and discuss it with your team.

If you cannot formulate a method or procedure that everyone is comfortable with, the job may be beyond the scope of work we can carry out.

Don't push your work group to work faster than they are comfortable with, as with volunteers this can be a recipe for injury.

Clothing and Safety wear.

- 1 Wear appropriate clothes in cold weather – coats, beanies etc.
- 2 In hot weather, wear hats, use sunscreen, carry water bottles.
- 3 Long sleeves and long legged trousers offer the best protection for this type of work. Overalls are a good option.
- 4 Wear fully enclosed rugged footwear with sturdy soles or safety boots.
- 5 Wear safety glasses and gloves.
- 6 Wear breathing masks if working in dusty areas, preferably a class P2 mask if asbestos is suspected in the area. (see asbestos section)

Personel Safety

- 1 Watch out for workmates – try not to work alone, always work in pairs as a minimum. (Buddy System)
- 2 Keep hydrated – drink plenty of water.
- 3 Keep spare water in vehicle.
- 4 When working in unfamiliar remote areas, don't wander off alone.
- 5 Do not work under burnt trees and structures. Branches and structures may collapse without warning. **Look up!** And don't work underneath weakened trees & buildings.
- 6 Keep your UHF on.
- 7 Know which UHF channel your work party is on and what channel other work parties are using.
- 8 Keep in your 4WD a mobile/sat phone/HF radio if you have them.
- 9 Think before lifting heavy weights. Ask for help if needed.
- 10 Snakes. Don't put hands and /or feet where you can't see them. Preferably wear long trousers, sox and boots. Be careful if lifting sheets of iron, wire, posts, logs, etc.

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Using Equipment

- 1 Chainsaws. If you own a chainsaw do not let anyone use your chainsaw other than people properly trained in use of chainsaws with appropriate recognized accreditation and wear the correct personal protection equipment at all times when using the equipment.
Chainsaws are to be used for clearing timber on the ground only. We do not fell trees.
Conduct a job safety assessment prior to use of chainsaws at all times.
- 2 Isolate the work area and ensure other volunteers stand well clear when chainsaws are in use.
- 3 Do not ride in trailers or in the back of utes.
- 4 Use vehicle seat belts at all times when driving, even for short distances, even when on farms and private property.
- 5 During fencing operations, stand well clear during wire tightening, be very careful when cutting and straining wire.
- 6 Be very careful when cutting taut wires.

First Aid

- 1 Each work group must have at least a Level 1 First Aider on hand but preferably a Level 2 if possible. Ensure your CPR is up to date.
- 2 Identify the best qualified person in your group to either call for First Aid or to administer First Aid.
- 3 Report any injuries to your team leader, no matter how minor they may seem.
- 4 Everyone should have a basic First Aid kit on hand and be prepared to use it.

Working with Land Owners

- 1 You may be working on Land Owners properties for people who are not used to having 'strangers' on their land; be careful to respect the owners privacy.
- 2 Be mindful that the Land Owner may still be distressed from the damage to their property and the fact that we are helping even in a small way can make a huge difference.
In many cases, just being there and helping with what may seem at the time to be pointless tasks can help the Land Owner back on their way to re-establishing themselves.
- 3 Encourage the Land Owner to join us over lunch, morning or afternoon tea, this can allow them to tell their story if they feel like it.
- 4 Don't work faster than the Land Owner is prepared to move as this may cause additional unwanted stress to the people we are working with.
- 5 Some Land Owners may ask you to do tasks that you feel exceeds the workers capabilities.
Discuss this with your team leader before proceeding.
- 6 Remember it is not a race to see how much work we can do, it is most important that we help the land owner get back on the road to recovery.

Asbestos

If you are working in areas where buildings have been damaged that were built prior to 1987, they may contain asbestos.

When inspecting sites be sure to wear a minimum of class P2 breathing mask and protective clothing. Whilst under certain controlled conditions asbestos can be removed, this is best left to licensed operators. If asbestos is discovered on the site of work, the area contaminated should be isolated and reported as containing asbestos.

If it is windy and dust is being raised, avoid working around contaminated areas. Asbestos contaminated areas can be wetted down to prevent air born particles.

The best policy is to avoid asbestos even if it means that work cannot continue until the asbestos is removed and the site declared safe.