

Operational Health & Safety for Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors (VBRVs)



Version 4 (December 2019)

An advisory document produced
by the Bat Volunteer team at
Natural England

Operational Health & Safety Guidance for Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors (VBRVs)

Introduction

Welcome to this Operational Health & Safety guidance for Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors (VBRVs) and their buddies. Like many organisations Natural England is committed to ensuring that those who work for and represent the organisation are protected and safe, and this includes you as a volunteer. The role of the VBRV can produce many challenges to your own personal safety and to the safety of those who are present with you, therefore this guide has been created to allow you to comprehensively plan for the majority of issues that can be faced on a roost visit, and give you the knowledge to negate or even eliminate those issues. As a starting point we recommend you begin with Part 1: Risk Management as this chapter is a good introduction to assessing hazard and risks.

Natural England Bat Volunteering team - October 2018.

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Part 1: Risk Management

As a VBRV it's really important you understand how to manage to potential risks you face. Natural England has produced this guidance to help you think about some potential hazards including:

- ❖ Aggression and violence
- ❖ Animal related diseases
- ❖ Churches, older buildings, spires and bell towers
- ❖ Dangerous & hazardous substances
- ❖ Driving
- ❖ Lone working
- ❖ Manual handling
- ❖ Personal Protective Equipment
- ❖ Restricted spaces
- ❖ Working at height

The guidance is only one part of ensuring that visits happen safely. There may be less frequent hazards present on site not covered by this list. And for every visit you will need to assess the risk to ensure that any potential harm is minimised.

Natural England have also developed a risk assessment which identifies common hazards encountered as part of the Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors role, along with recommended measures to reduce the level of risk. This will be sent to you each time you are requested to do a roost visit for us, and you should review this before commencing your roost visit arrangements.

Where additional risks are identified, or you need to take additional measures to reduce the risk in specific cases, we need you to alert us to this on the relevant section of the Roost Report form. This allows the risk assessment to be updated with any new information.

What are hazards and risks? A 'hazard' is anything that may cause harm such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc.

The 'risk' is the chance - high or low - that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

What is a risk assessment?

The aim of a risk assessment is to:

- ❖ Avoid hazards where possible.
- ❖ Assess the risks from those hazards that cannot be avoided.
- ❖ Reduce the risks to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

The five steps to risk assessment are:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings (using NE Risk Assessment Form) and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

How do I reduce the risk?

The Natural England Risk Assessment for Volunteer Bat Roost Visits outlines the most common hazards, and relevant control measures. However on attending a roost visit you may need to identify additional measures depending on the situation.

You can do this in a number of ways for each hazard:

1. Eliminate the hazard

This should always be the starting point when considering the appropriate control to take. You may not always be able to eliminate the hazard, but it should be considered initially.

Roost visit example: avoiding working at height by doing the inspection from the ground using binoculars.

2. Reduce the risk or substitute by adopting a safe system of work

This may include doing a task in a different way (for example a hatch survey where no loft boarding is present) or substituting another action with a safer alternative. By consulting all guidance provided to VBRVs you can create and plan an effective survey.

Further roost visit example: Using a buddy system to ensure the alarm is raised if you do not return from a visit when expected or taking a buddy with you on a visit.

3. Prevent contact with the risk / separation

This could be achieved by enclosing the hazard in a separate area / building, or placing barriers around the hazard to direct people away.

Roost visit example: ask the householder / caretaker to stop anyone coming near the ladders. Place barrier tape around the top of a roof hatch to prevent falling through the open space.

4. Safe systems of work

This could be in the form of safety procedures, safety rules, 'Do's and Don'ts', or more formal 'Permit to Work' systems. You should consider whether training is required to undertake a certain activity.

Roost visit example: using a safe return buddy system to ensure the alarm is raised if you do not return from a visit when expected.

5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In some instances it is appropriate to manage risk by using PPE – where the preceding steps have all been considered. Natural England provides volunteers with PPE which meets the standards required for this activity. See Part 11 for further information.

Roost visit example: wear hard hat to protect head against bumps and more serious injuries when in loft space.

You do not have to eliminate all risk associated with your visit, but you do need to ensure that you and others are properly protected by taking reasonable precautions.

This five point list is known as the hierarchy of control – if you start at the top of the hierarchy ('Eliminate the hazard') you will put in place the most effective control measures. You do not have to eliminate all risk associated with your visit, but you do need to ensure that you and others are properly protected by taking reasonable precautions.

Reporting an incident

You must report any accident, near hit or incident which occurs whilst performing or travelling to / from a roost visit to Natural England as soon as possible. Contact the Natural England incident reporting helpline during office hours on 0300 060 0100 and outside office hours on 0300 060 4451.

Right skills and training

Training on 'Risk management' is available to Natural England VBRVs on request via the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.



Part 2: Dealing with violence and aggression

What about violence and aggression?

The risk of experiencing aggression, harassment or violence in association with roost visiting is very low. The risk can come from the occupier or even a member of the public witnessing your survey. Where there is even a small risk it is good to know how best to manage an incident.

It is very unlikely that any aggression or conflict you face is a result of something you have done. As difficult as it is, try not to take hostility personally. There is no set definition for what is 'abusive', as every individual has their own limits. It is up to each volunteer to decide when someone has reached that limit. People could display one or more of the following behaviours when being abusive:

- ❖ Shouting
- ❖ Calling you unpleasant names
- ❖ Threatening
- ❖ Using an aggressive tone
- ❖ Using bad language

Managing the risks

When undertaking a bat roost visit ensure you:

- ❖ Have the right skills and training
- ❖ Are prepared in the event of an incident.

Right skills and training

Online training on how to spot and control rising aggression and violence is available to all Natural England VBRVs. Please contact the bat volunteer's mailbox if you or your accompanying buddy has not completed this module.

Being prepared

When you are planning to go to a face-to-face meeting it is important to have as much information as possible about the person you are seeing. Give yourself plenty of time to arrive at the agreed time. Communicate any changes or delays with the person you are visiting.

When arranging a roost visit over the phone you may get a feeling about the building occupier's mood or attitude. This might influence how you carry out the visit (e.g. you might decide to ask another roost visitor to accompany you).

Have your Natural England I.D. at hand, should anyone request your identity. For example when conducting an emergence survey outside a property the occupier will be aware of your presence but members of the public will not be.

If you are attending a roost visit and the occupier or a member of the public is becoming agitated or aggressive there are a number of de-escalation techniques you can use. These work best if you choose one you feel comfortable with and can practise:

1. Simple Listening

- ✓ Just listening, saying very little or nothing.
- ✓ Allow the person to vent their frustration and just be attentive.
- ✓ Nod your head and sometimes give encouragement, such as "Go on," or "Yes."

2. Active Listening

- ✓ Listen, acknowledge and demonstrate understanding and empathy with the individual by reflecting, clarifying and summarising his / her thoughts and feelings.
- ✓ Put yourself in the other person's situation as best you can.
- ✓ Active listening means attending not only to the words the other person is saying but also the underlying emotion and accompanying body language.

3. Acknowledgement

- ✓ Acknowledge when you can legitimately understand the person's angry emotion.
- ✓ Be sincere and respond with, "I can see how something like that could make you angry!" You might say, "If that happened to me, I might be angry, too."
- ✓ Use a calming and respectful tone of voice designed to help the other person let go of their angry emotion - it confirms the legitimacy of the emotion, but not the behaviour.
- ✓ State that you want to help in any way you can.

4. Apologising

- ✓ Do apologise when something occurred that was not right.
- ✓ This is not about taking responsibility for something that was not your fault.
- ✓ You might say "I'm sorry the situation has frustrated you."

5. Agreeing

- ✓ When attempting to diffuse someone's anger, it is important to listen for any element of truth and acknowledge and agree with that.
- ✓ In many cases this will reduce the 'me against them' and diminish tension.

6. Your Body Language

- ✓ Be aware of your own body language and present a non-threatening, open stance. Try to avoid folded arms, leaning forward, furrowed eyebrows.
- ✓ Keep good eye contact but ensure this does not appear confrontational.
- ✓ Move slowly and steadily. Try to keep physical movements calm.

- ✓ Personal space: give people space. When people are under pressure or stressed, what is regarded as safe personal space is often expanded so where things might be escalating take a step back.

If you feel the situation is escalating, always leave as soon as you can

Here are some quick tips to avoid an incident escalating:

1. Park your car in an unobstructed position facing the exit
2. Say who you are, why you are there. Have your Natural England I.D. ready.
3. Identify the person you are talking to, and any other person(s) present.
4. If possible advise the occupier of how much time your visit will require.
5. Do not enter a house etc. if the appropriate person is not available.
6. Wait to be invited in, acknowledge it is their territory by letting them lead the way
7. You may decide it is best not to go in or to leave immediately e.g. if the person has been drinking or is aggressive. Trust your instincts.
8. Position yourself by exit doors to ensure you can get out quickly if necessary
9. If you are not happy for dogs or other animals to be present, ask for them to be put in another room.
10. Remain alert. Watch for changes in mood, movements or expressions.



Part 3: Lone working

What about lone working?

As a Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) you will often work and travel alone, without direct supervision or assistance. Even if occupiers or other members of the public are present at a roost you are still deemed to be volunteering on your own or lone working.

What are the hazards?

Some of the more common lone working hazards include (non-exhaustive):

- ❖ Working with the general public especially if they are people you have not met before.
- ❖ Going into rural or isolated areas, sometimes with poor communication links
- ❖ Going into restricted spaces and working at height.

How are visits arranged to adjust for lone working?

Before you are assigned a visit the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) will have asked the roost owner if in the event of an emergency they are willing to call the emergency services on your behalf. If the roost owner refuses you will be informed by the BCT of this decision and you must be accompanied by another VBRV, VBRV trainee or buddy.

When is lone working NOT acceptable?

Lone working on a roost visit is not permitted when:

- ❖ You will need to use a ladder, and only an unsecured ladder is available;
- ❖ There are indications of aggression from the site contact or roost owner;
- ❖ The site contact or roost owner has left the property or is about to leave the property;
- ❖ The site contact or roost owner has not agreed with the BCT to call the emergency services should there be an emergency.

You must not proceed on these visits without either additional equipment for ladders, or being accompanied by another VBRV or buddy.

Managing the risks

The best way to control the hazards associated with lone working is to avoid lone working. Pairing up with another VBRV or buddy can significantly reduce the risks not only from lone working but those associated with manual handling, violence & aggression and working in restricted spaces. It also means you will have someone to help with emergency arrangements should anything happen while on the visit.

When undertaking a bat roost visit alone ensure you:

- ❖ Have the right skills and training
- ❖ Have a safe system of work for an emergency situation
- ❖ Are prepared in the event of an incident.

Right skills and training

Online training on how to spot and control rising aggression and violence is available to all VBRVs. Please contact the bat volunteer's mailbox if you have not completed it.

Try to adopt a sensitive and empathetic approach to the building occupier, use your knowledge to engage and educate the individual(s) - it can be invaluable to help members of the public understand what you are trying to achieve. If you sense the individual is becoming aggressive then leave as quickly as possible.

Safe system of work:

I.D. Card

I.D. cards issued from 2020 will feature the Natural England Incident reporting telephone number and will state that in an emergency to call 999. This card must be shown to all roost owners on arrival.

Mobile Phone

Prior to going on the visit check you have a good mobile phone signal in the area which you are visiting and ensure you have a charged battery. As part of arranging your visit with the roost owner you may wish to check with them the extent and strength of mobile phone signals in the area.

Buddy System

You must set a buddy system to ensure the alarm is raised if you do not return from a visit when expected (off-site buddy) or alternatively you can ask a buddy to accompany you on a visit (on-site buddy).

A buddy can accompany you on a visit as long as they are at least 18 years old, in good health and known to you as someone you can trust. They must also have completed two Natural England Health & Safety courses (**Role of the Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor** and **Dealing with Violence and Aggression**) prior to any planned visit.

An on-site buddy can play a large role in keeping you safe, by acting as a potential reassurance to roost owners and to you. Buddies however cannot actively participate in the survey; for example they cannot enter loft spaces with the VBRV or foot ladders.

Full guidance on off-site and off-site Buddies is available in Part 4.

Be prepared

Have a first aid kit available to treat minor injuries. Have an agreement with the building occupier to ensure any injury sustained whilst undertaking the visit is communicated quickly and the alarm raised.



Part 4: Buddies

What is a buddy?

Buddies can play a crucial role in helping each Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) have a roost visit which is as safe as possible. Buddies come in two types:

- ❖ Off-Site Buddies who do not accompany you on a visit;
- ❖ On-Site Buddies who do accompany you on a visit

Anyone can be a buddy provided they are 18 years or older and can be a relative or friend. What is vital is that they know what to do within their role as a buddy. This guidance will enable you to prepare your buddy for all eventualities both off-site and on-site.

Your buddy must read this guidance before each and every roost visit you conduct.

Off-Site Buddy

In the majority of cases you will conduct your survey without incident and you will arrive home safely. However for whatever reason you may be delayed in arriving home and sometimes you cannot be contacted, often through no fault of your own. It is important your assigned buddy is familiar with this guidance and knows what to do if you cannot be contacted and have not arrived home within your intended timeframe.

Before you conduct your visit your buddy must have the following information:

- ❖ **Name, address and telephone number for roost site being visited,**
- ❖ **The make, model, colour and licence plate of your vehicle,**
- ❖ **Description of clothing worn,**
- ❖ **Your mobile and telephone number,**
- ❖ **What timeframe you intend to contact your buddy to confirm your safe arrival home.**

If you haven't arrived home?

If you have not contacted your buddy confirming your safe arrival home your buddy is expected to follow this procedure:

- ❖ **Buddy tries your mobile phone every 15 minutes for first hour, i.e. at 15, 30, 45 & 60 minutes,**

- ❖ **Buddy also uses contact details for property being visited to call roost owner/site contact and establish when you were last seen,**
- ❖ **Buddy continues to try to contact you via mobile phone,**
- ❖ **If no contact established with you or roost owner/site contact after another 30 minutes, Buddy contacts police with your details (description, vehicle details and address being visited) & obtains Police Incident Reference Number. At this stage the buddy will also need to inform Natural England of the above details.**

If the incident has occurred within office hours please call the incident reporting helpline at **0300 060 0100**.

If the incident has occurred outside office hours please contact the Natural England duty officer at **0300 060 4451**.

On-Site Buddy

Again in the vast majority of cases you will conduct your survey without incident. Taking another VBRV or trainee with you is preferable, however there are situations where taking a buddy with you can be useful.

We have already established that a buddy is required to be over 18 and can be a friend or relative. With On-Site buddies they must also be fit and healthy and ideally be a 'people' person as they may interact with the roost owner/site contact. On initial contact with the roost owner/site contact you should state that you will be bringing your buddy with you as they will not have or be issued with a Natural England identity card. Buddies do not need to register with Natural England and do not need to have a Class 1 or 2 licence. It is however your responsibility to ensure that your buddy has completed the following Health & Safety modules:

- ❖ The Role of the Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor,
- ❖ Dealing With Violence and Aggression.

Please contact the [bat volunteer's mailbox](#) who can arrange for the modules to be emailed to you.

On-Site buddies do not need in-depth knowledge of bats, this is your role as a VBRV. Preferably they should have some Health & Safety knowledge (First Aid). Their main role is to provide support to you where you have identified lone working is an issue on a particular visit (for example helping to carry a ladder or PPE). The ability to interact with the roost owner/ site contact is helpful as an addition to your requirements.

As you will know the roost owner/ site contact must not participate in actions connected to your survey, for example footing ladders. Similarly there are actions that an on-site buddy cannot participate in. A buddy (like a roost owner/site contact) is not a VBRV, has not had the training a VBRV has had, does not have the licence you have and therefore cannot actively participate in the survey itself.

A Buddy cannot:

Enter the loft space/church tower with you: An action only for a VBRV or VBRV trainee.

Handle Bats: Again an action only for a VBRV or VBRV trainee and then only when absolutely required as a last resort.

Foot ladders: If you are conducting a roost visit without a VBRV or VBRV trainee you are still deemed to be lone working. Therefore the Natural England issued ladder with built-in stabilisation bar or M8TriX Pro stabilisation device must be used to foot a ladder where required and practicable. A buddy must never foot a ladder.

Propose recommendations to the roost owner/site contact: Only a fully-trained and licence-holding VBRV can provide recommendations.

Participate in other actions stipulated as unsafe within the Risk Assessment: See this guidance for further information.

Your Buddy is insured

Natural England self-insures. Provided the VBRV and buddy have followed this and all Natural England guidance then they are financially covered should an accident or incident occur.

And finally

Whatever your requirements it is important to note that the role of the buddy can be a vital support for your peace of mind, providing a support to you on each roost visit.



Part 5: Working at height and use of ladders

What about working at height?

Many roost visits will include working at height. This might involve using your own ladders, those supplied to you by NE or those of the householder / owner / caretaker if they have means of access to their own loft space / attic, or to the bell tower / spire or other part of a church. It is also important to recognise fragile roofs can also pose a significant hazard as they could also involve a significant fall from height.

What are the hazards?

- ❖ Falls:
- ❖ from equipment such as ladders or
- ❖ through fragile roofs, or
- ❖ through loft hatches, access points
- ❖ Manual handling of the ladder. See Part 11 for further information.

Managing the risk of falling from height

- ❖ Avoid working at height where possible
- ❖ Check you have the right skills and training
- ❖ Check you have the right equipment & can work safely
- ❖ Ensure you are fit and well.

Avoid where possible

Consider if it is possible to complete the inspection from looking at the exterior of the roost - perhaps using binoculars or cameras to capture evidence from the ground.

Due to the risks involved, legislation restricts the use of ladders and stepladders. They may only be used for:

- ❖ Tasks that are low-risk and short-duration (15 to 30 minutes maximum),
- ❖ Low-risk tasks where site features prevent the use of safer alternatives, or
- ❖ Temporary access purposes.

Right skills and training

Training on 'Working at height' is available to all VBRVs. Please contact the bat volunteer's mailbox if you have not completed this module.

Right equipment & safe working arrangements

High risk areas may require additional safety measures such as the use of temporary barriers or fall arrest equipment around the top of roof hatches for example. Do not use equipment you are unfamiliar with. You need to plan your visit to ensure that you have a safe means of access.

Ladders

Surveyor's ladders should be manufactured to the EN131 standard – this means they are rated for professional rather than domestic use. Natural England issues a yearly ladder checklist to all VBRVs (which can be found in Part 13). This must be completed for all Natural England issued and VBRV owned ladders. The checklist should also be used before and after each use of the ladder. The checklist asks you to check all aspects of the ladder for safety - for example it asks if the ladder is free from flaws, cracks dents and defects. If any defects are found the ladder will be replaced by Natural England.

The checklist should be taken with you on every visit and is available at request via the bat volunteer's mailbox.

You should only use a ladder where a risk assessment demonstrates:

- ❖ You are using the right type of ladder for the task and it is in good condition.
- ❖ The task is low risk – for example doing a visual inspection
- ❖ The task is short duration – no more than 15 to 30 minutes depending on the task being performed. You can resume the operation after a suitable break if necessary.
- ❖ Features on site, which cannot be changed, mean other more suitable equipment cannot be deployed safely or effectively.
- ❖ A handhold is available on the ladder or step ladder.
- ❖ You can maintain three points of contact on the ladder (hands and feet) at the working position.
- ❖ The ladder is on firm ground or the load is spread.
- ❖ The ladder is on level ground.
- ❖ You can tie or secure the ladder.

Securing the ladder

Where there is no fixed ladder available, you will need to secure your ladder before use.

A ladder stabilising device used at the foot of the ladder (if your ladder does not have a built-in stabilisation bar) will also provide more stability and avoid the ladder slipping. Natural England provide the PPE device Ladder M8trix Pro-Plus as this can be used indoors and outdoors.

The Ladder M8trix Pro-Plus comes in a carry case. The underside has a rubber mat for use indoors to prevent slipping. For further information click on the following video: [M8Trix Pro video](#) (click on link).

Where no ladder stabilising device is available, and the ladder cannot be secured you should not access the roof space/height. If accessing this space is necessary a re-visit with another VBRV or trainee VBRV will be needed so that they are able to foot the ladder. Footing the ladder is the least effective way of securing the ladder.

The site contact (householder/ owner/ caretaker) must not be asked to foot ladders.

Step Ladders

Step ladders are not recommended for accessing heights such as roof spaces. These can only be used for observing from the steps.

See HSE booklet [Safe use of ladders and step ladders – a brief guide](#) (Click on link)

Roost Owners ladder

Where you are using the householder's / owner's / caretaker's means of access:

- ❖ Assess its condition before use.
- ❖ Ask about the space you are about to enter: Is there a light? Are there boards to walk / crawl on and are they in good condition? Are there areas to avoid?
- ❖ Consider what you would fall on to - might that increase the risk of severe injury?

Other work at height

Roof spaces that are un-boarded would be classed as fragile work surfaces. Our current risk assessment requires that VBRVs should not enter an un-boarded roof space and should undertake any observations of the bat roost from the roof hatch only. Specific guidance on how such survey work can be undertaken is available at request from Natural England via the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.



Part 6: Churches, older buildings, spires and bell towers

Unlike commercial properties, some houses, churches and their associated spires and bell towers may not have been inspected regularly, although most will have had a structural inspection every ten years. A lot can happen to old buildings within this time so extra attention to hazard identification and additional control measures may be required.

What are the hazards?

Some of the more common hazards may include (non-exhaustive):

- ❖ Inadequate access & egress – steep uneven stairs, old wooden ladders
- ❖ Insufficient flooring – uneven & rotten timbers
- ❖ Holes or unexpected drops in the floor
- ❖ Exposed electrical cables
- ❖ Falling material
- ❖ Hazardous substances & dusts, including unidentified asbestos
- ❖ Damp conditions & exposure to spores
- ❖ Noise from bells ringing
- ❖ Poor visibility – limited natural or artificial light
- ❖ Restricted spaces

Bell towers can be particularly hazardous as many are infrequently used or visited:

- ❖ Flooring in ringing chambers and belfries is particularly prone to decay and boring by insects such as Death Watch and Furniture Beetles because of open louvers above. The former can turn wood to powder, just leaving an intact-looking surface.
- ❖ If the bells are still rung they are extremely dangerous if left "up" on their stays. Unless bells are hanging downwards, it is vital that no one enters a bell chamber. Being hit by 1.5 tons of swinging bell metal will have serious consequences.
- ❖ If the bells are connected to a clock, sounding whilst in the tower could cause a hearing damage. It is therefore important to ask for clock bells to be disengaged before entering, or noting frequency and time of sounding before entering and avoiding the time bells are due to ring.

Managing the risks

If you need to survey a church, older building, spire or bell tower you must follow these rules for safe working:

- ❖ Churches can be dangerous so be aware of your limitations. Your level of involvement in such roost visits must always depend on your level of experience, the time and help you have available, the extent of the proposed work and the timings of the work. If you feel unable to undertake a survey please inform the BCT helpline. You should never accept a visit if you are not confident you are able to carry it out safely.
- ❖ Avoid entering older properties and spires or bell towers whenever possible, for example by doing external inspections. Wear the correct Personal Protective Equipment.
- ❖ Make appropriate arrangements for help in an emergency. Consult Natural England's buddy guidance for example.
- ❖ Allow extra time to properly assess the risks.

Avoid entering churches, older buildings, spires and bell towers

Always aim to work outside. Is it possible to complete the inspection from the roost's exterior? Perhaps by using binoculars or cameras to capture evidence from the ground?

Follow a safe system of work

Examine the task in order to identify all the hazards. This should define safe methods to ensure that hazards are reduced or eliminated.

Ensure you have the right experience to go into these areas. Take an experienced VBRV with you or contact BCT for more advice. If you are conducting the visit on your own there is more guidance available in Parts 3 & 4.

If possible check with church officials or building occupier for the most up-to-date information they have about the structural soundness of the building, bell tower or spire. There will be a number of areas you will need to check before going into the space:

- ❖ Inspect any ladders thoroughly, referring to the ladder checklist. Wooden ladders in particular should be double checked for signs of woodworm. Check wooden flooring for signs of decay.
- ❖ A basic visual check will identify broken rubble, loose brickwork or other deterioration to the fabric of the building
- ❖ Be aware in older buildings that asbestos may be present around old boilers & redundant pipe work or in the fabric of the walls / ceiling. There is additional guidance in Part 5.
- ❖ Ensure there are no signs of unprotected electrical cables.
- ❖ Do not proceed where there are drops or gaps in the flooring.

Use of the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE can play an important role in protecting you from some of the hazards. Be aware that visually similar products (e.g. dust masks) can offer varying levels of protection depending on their specification. There is more guidance available on PPE in Part 11.

Emergencies

You should make arrangements for emergency rescue before entering an old building, spire or bell tower. You need to consider:

- ❖ Requesting the building occupier / caretaker to remain present for the duration of the inspection.
- ❖ The number of people involved. It is rarely, if ever, appropriate for anyone to enter a restricted space without someone remaining outside to carry out the emergency arrangements. Consider undertaking the visit with another VBRV or having another VBRV act in a buddy capacity to monitor your safe return after the visit.
- ❖ Communications - make sure someone outside the danger area will know if there is an emergency inside.



Part 7: Animal related diseases

What are animal related diseases?

There are a variety of biological hazards that may be present on a roost visit and any of these could lead to disease if precautions are not taken to reduce the risks. The most common Zoonosis (animal related diseases) you will come into contact with will be associated with birds, rats and the bats themselves. Others might be present on more rural locations. Some of these diseases can be serious or fatal.

What are the hazards?

Some of the more common hazards are listed below but this is not exhaustive

- ❖ **Rabies in bats or European Bat Lyssavirus (EBLV).**
Transmitted through contact with an infected bat, e.g. through bites, scratches or saliva. Fatal viral disease if no treatment is received.

- ❖ **Rat infestation and exposure to rat urine.**
Rat urine or water contaminated with it can cause leptospirosis / Weil's disease if it enters a cut or gets into the nose, mouth or eyes.

- ❖ **Contamination with sewage or animal faeces.**
This can lead to infection with *E. coli*, a bacterium which can cause stomach problems or more serious ill health. Sewage could also be contaminated with Hepatitis A.

- ❖ **Bird droppings.**
Inhaling dust or water droplets from contaminated bird droppings. The risk of diseases such as Psittacosis from bio-aerosol inhalation is negligible if the matter is not disturbed.

Exposure to the above even in small quantities can have a damaging effect on your health.

Managing the risks

You should:

- ❖ Ensure your rabies vaccination and booster schedule is up to date.
- ❖ Understand what to look out for and perform visual inspection to identify any hazards.
- ❖ Cover cuts and abrasions before any visit.
- ❖ Wear the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- ❖ Make appropriate arrangements for hygiene and first aid.
- ❖ Identify symptoms and early warning signs.

Rabies vaccination

All level 1 and 2 Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors must have up-to-date rabies vaccination. For the primary vaccination three doses of rabies are given on days 0, 7 and 28. A single booster is given one year after the primary course and subsequent boosters are required to be administered every three to five years. The requirement for VBRV trainees to be vaccinated is not compulsory, this is due to trainees always being accompanied by more experienced level 1 and level 2 VBRVs. Further rabies guidance, including how to obtain the vaccine is available [here](#) (click on link).

Please note that Public Health England (PHE) only provides free-of-charge vaccine for individuals where there is no identified employer and the individual is regularly handling bats. All other individuals at occupational risk of rabies should obtain rabies vaccination through their employer following a risk assessment based on their specific roles and responsibilities. Please provide information on the organisation the individual is volunteering for, their role within the organisation, their training status and how often they have handled bats in the last 6 months and/or plan to in the next 6 months. This information will be used to determine if the correct groups of individuals are being targeted for free vaccination.

Immunosuppression

If you are currently taking or have previously taken medication or other treatment or have been diagnosed with certain medical conditions that severely suppresses the immune system this can affect the response to rabies immunisation and booster doses. Be advised that should you be exposed to bat lyssavirus it is possible that you may not respond to post-exposure vaccine and it may not be possible to treat you. PHE advises that in these circumstances you should give serious consideration to not handling bats and therefore cease volunteering as a VBRV whilst your immune system is suppressed and for a specified period of time afterwards (to be confirmed by your GP Surgery).

Covering cuts and abrasions

Your skin is a natural defence against many animal transmitted diseases but cuts and abrasions will allow absorption into your blood stream so ensure that any cuts and abrasion are well covered with waterproof plasters.

Use of the correct Personal Protective Equipment PPE

PPE can play an important role in protecting you from some of the hazards, examples include:

| Item | Protects against |
|------------|---|
| Gloves | Absorption through skin. Direct contact with harmful substances. Bites |
| Goggles | Absorption through direct contact with eye |
| Overalls | Contact with hazardous substances onto personal clothing |
| Dust masks | Inhalation of harmful substances (optional and primarily for comfort purposes). |

Hygiene and first aid

You need to consider the following:

- ❖ Arrangements for washing your hands after the visit and - importantly - before eating, drinking or smoking.
- ❖ Correct disposal of any gloves / coveralls which may have come into contact with a dangerous / hazardous substance. For further information please click [here](#) (click on link).
- ❖ A small first aid kit to treat any minor injuries.

Identifying symptoms and early warning signs

If you think you have been exposed to any of the animal related diseases contact your GP.

The Public Health England and NHS website has additional guidance on many of the common Zoonosis:

| Disease | Source encountered on roost visits | Usual mode of transmission to humans | Symptoms |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Cryptosporidiosis | Pets | Water Direct contact | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe watery diarrhoea |
| Hantavirus syndromes | Rodents | Inhalation in aerosol form: Particles in air. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tiredness• Fever• Muscle aches in thighs, hips, back, & sometimes shoulders. |
| Leptospirosis | Rodents | Infected urine Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High temperature that is usually between 38 & 40°C (100.4 & 104°F)• Chills• Sudden headaches• Nausea and vomiting• Loss of appetite• Muscle pain (particularly affecting calves & lower back)• Conjunctivitis (irritation & redness of eyes)• Cough• Short-lived rash |

Identifying symptoms and early warning signs

| Disease | Source encountered on roost visits | Usual mode of transmission to humans | Symptoms |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Q fever | Cats | Inhalation in aerosol form: Particles in air Direct contact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) • Severe headaches • Muscle & joint pain • Sweats • Sore throat • Sensitivity to light • Weight loss |
| Rabies | Bats | Bites Scratches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above • Chills • Fatigue (extreme tiredness) • Problems sleeping • Lack of appetite • Headache • Irritability • Anxiety • Sore throat • Vomiting |
| Toxoplasmosis | Cats | Ingestion of faecal material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aching muscles • Fever of 38°C (100.4°F) or over • Tiredness • Feeling sick • Sore throat • Can lead to miscarriage / still birth in pregnant women |



Part 8: Dangerous & hazardous substances

What are dangerous & hazardous substances?

There are a number of substances that you may come into contact with during the roost visit that can be categorised as dangerous or hazardous. Some of these may be clearly labelled with appropriate warnings but many may not always be obvious. The age and construction material of the property may affect the likelihood of coming into contact with some of these substances so it is important you make a careful assessment of the premises you are visiting.

What are the hazards?

| Substance | Risk / danger |
|---|--|
| Asbestos | Carcinogen (cancer-causing) |
| Toxins such as vermin control measures | Can cause sickness and in extreme cases be fatal. |
| Marked hazards such as irritants, flammables & corrosives | Various health risks dependent upon hazard marking. |
| Dusts, including silica & lead | Remote possibility of exacerbating existing respiratory conditions (only when disturbed). Can cause irritation to the eyes & skin). |
| Fibres, including loft insulation | Remote possibility of exacerbating existing respiratory conditions (only when disturbed). Can cause irritation to the eyes & skin). |

Exposure to the above, even in small quantities, can have a damaging effect on your health.

Hazards associated with animals and animal faeces are addressed in Part 7.

Identify and understand the hazard

- ❖ **Training:** ensure you have the right experience & training to go into these areas. Asbestos awareness training is available to all VBRVs. Please contact the bat volunteer mailbox if you have not completed it.
- ❖ **Information:** if possible, check with the building owner/ occupier / caretaker if they are aware of the presence of any hazardous substances. Make an assessment based on this information as to whether to go into the area and what potential PPE you might require.
- ❖ **Visually inspect the area before you enter and move through it:** are there obvious signs of dust and debris?
- ❖ **Check for any marked / labelled substances.** Visually check they are safe, sealed and not leaking. Avoid moving or disturbing these. Symbols include:



Flammable



Corrosive



Carcinogen
Health Hazard



Irritant



Toxic

Managing the risks

If you visit areas where dangerous or hazardous substances may be present you will need to:

- ❖ Identify and understand the various substances which may adversely affect your health;
- ❖ Avoid areas where you suspect any dangerous or hazardous substance to be especially if it may be disturbed by your activity;
- ❖ Wear the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and
- ❖ Make appropriate arrangements for hygiene and first aid.

Avoid working where there are dangerous or hazardous substances

Always aim to work outside. Consider if it is possible to complete the inspection from the roost's exterior - perhaps using binoculars or cameras to capture evidence from the ground.

Use of the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE can play an important role in protecting you from some of the hazards. Examples include:

| Item | Protects against |
|-----------------|--|
| Gloves | Dusts, fibres and debris causing skin irritation |
| Goggles | Dusts, fibres and debris causing eye irritation |
| Overalls | Contact with hazardous substances onto personal clothing causing skin irritation |
| Face/Dust masks | Disturbed dusts, fibres and debris which can cause respiratory irritation (supplied as optional PPE) |

Be aware that visually similar products can offer varying levels of protection depending on their specification. See Part 11 for further information.

Hygiene and first aid

You should consider the following:

- ❖ Arrangements for washing your hands after the visit and - importantly - prior to eating, drinking or smoking.
- ❖ Any gloves / coveralls which may have come into contact with a dangerous / hazardous substance must be disposed of responsibly. For further information please see the following websites:
 - ❖ [HSE Guidance](#)(click on link)
 - ❖ [GOV.UK Guidance](#) (click on link)
- ❖ Carrying a small first aid kit to treat any minor injuries.



Part 9: Manual handling

What about manual handling?

A roost visit might require you or an accompanying VBRV, VBRV Trainee or Buddy to lift or lower, carry, push or pull items. The most common item you might need to lift and carry is a ladder but you may need to move small obstacles to create an access or exit route, although large and heavy obstacles should be moved by the roost owner/contact.

Manual handling any item can cause strains and musculoskeletal problems. These can be very serious and the damage long-lasting. There are also less significant risks such as bumps and abrasions from dropping loads or cuts and bruises from sharp objects.

When considering manual handling you should always first ask whether it is necessary. Do you really need to manual handle? You should avoid doing so wherever possible. If it is unavoidable you should follow the process below.

Assess the risk – plan and prepare

Where manual handling cannot be completely avoided, then think about 'TILE':

Task – Individual – Load – Environment

Task

Will you need to carry the ladder or load a long distance?

Do you need to move any obstructions?

Is there somewhere near / within easy distance to move the load?

Individual

Are you able to carry the ladder or load?

Have you had any recent injuries or illness that might affect your ability to carry the ladders or load?

Might the weight of the ladders or load exacerbate an injury?

Load

How will you carry the ladder or load?

Are there handles?

How heavy is what you are carrying?

Can you get a good grip?

Are there sharp edges?

Environment

Will you need to carry the ladder or load up steps?

Are there awkward areas to negotiate?

Is the route free from trip hazards?

Is there clear visibility?

Remember, the Risk Assessment for Volunteer Bat Roost visits includes manual handling risks and precautions which can be taken to reduce the risk. These include having another VBRV to accompany you on the visit to assist with manual handling, having the light weight ladders provided by Natural England and if desired requesting a carry belt to take smaller items of kit into the area with you, such as torches, ratchet straps and so on.

To avoid risk of injury:

- ❖ Ask “do I have to do this?”;
- ❖ Test objects first - know your limits;
- ❖ Get stable before you move;
- ❖ Concentrate on keeping your back in a natural line;
- ❖ Make all movements smoothly;
- ❖ Use your leg muscles to provide power and upper body to control the load;
- ❖ Stop if things start to go wrong.

The risk of injury is increased by:

- ❖ Sudden unexpected movements
- ❖ Awkward postures
- ❖ Static, fixed postures
- ❖ Extremes of joint movement
- ❖ Excessive forces
- ❖ Overuse.

Perform

Before lifting anything think about doing some gentle stretching to warm up your muscles – especially if it is very cold as muscles are more prone to damage if cold. Follow the basic principles of lifting in table 1:

| Principle | What does it look like | Why it's important |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Dynamic stable base | Feet spread apart, one foot slightly forward, ready to move | Gives you the ability to adjust quickly to any changes, keeps your back's three natural curves |
| Soft hips and knees | Think of a puppet rather than a tin soldier, joints are not rigid or locked out | Gives you the ability to adjust quickly to any changes, keeps your back's three natural curves |
| Keep load close | Hugging the load, gripping with whole hand not just fingers | Gives you more stability & control, works with your centre of gravity |
| Keep joints in mid-range | Your back has three curves. Knees are half bent (like a goalkeeper's stance) - not full crouch. Elbows close to sides not raised | Less pressure on ligaments, muscles & joints Maintains three natural curves Stronger |
| Don't twist - turn | Difference between turn and twist: turning involves moving your feet, twisting rotates the spine. Move your feet to the direction of travel | Twisting puts huge pressure on the spine. Keeping hips and shoulders in line makes you stronger, maintains three natural curves & provides more stability. |
| Transfer weight effectively | Use the power you have in your legs rather than your back | Gives you more stability & control, works with your centre of gravity |



Part 10: Restricted spaces

What is a restricted space?

A restricted space is an area where access and / or egress are difficult or where there is restricted working space which presents a hazard. Examples include:

- ❖ Small loft spaces and attics
- ❖ Basements
- ❖ Undercrofts and crypts with low ceilings and difficult escape routes
- ❖ Church spires and bell towers

Generally a restricted access space is one where there is a need to manage access for health and safety reasons and to have good communications between people in the space and others who can provide assistance in an emergency.

What are the hazards?

These can vary depending upon the restricted space. Common hazards might include:

- ❖ Slips and trips
- ❖ Unstable and fragile flooring
- ❖ Overcome with heat or cold
- ❖ Stuffy atmosphere leading to respiration difficulties or feeling faint
- ❖ Head injuries from low beams
- ❖ Electricity and other utilities
- ❖ Dust leading to respiratory difficulties
- ❖ Poor lighting

Managing the risks

If the visit involves going into a restricted space you should follow these rules for safe working:

- ❖ Avoid working in a restricted space whenever possible, for example by carrying out inspections from outside the restricted space;
- ❖ Follow a safe system of work if working inside; and
- ❖ Make appropriate arrangements for help in an emergency.

Avoid working in restricted spaces

The first rule for preventing these accidents is always to aim to work without entering a restricted space. Consider if it is possible to complete the inspection from looking at the exterior of the roost - perhaps using binoculars or cameras to capture evidence from the ground.

Follow a safe system of work

If entry into a restricted space is unavoidable you must make sure you follow a safe system of work and emergency procedures. Here are some of the factors to consider but there may be others:

- ❖ Check with the building owner /occupier / caretaker about any known potential hazards & make an assessment of the risk.
- ❖ Competence: are you familiar with this type of space? Have you had guidance and training on what to do?
- ❖ Communication: is there clear communication between those inside the restricted space and those outside? In most situations normal speech will be adequate. You should also take into account how to summon help in an emergency. Ask the owner / occupier / caretaker to stay close-by to summon help if necessary. Consider having another VBRV on the visit with you.
- ❖ Ventilation: restricted spaces should be ventilated while inspecting. It may be sufficient to leave hatches or doors open.
- ❖ Personal protective equipment (PPE): will PPE reduce the risk sufficiently to make it safe to work? Or might the PPE present an additional hazard? Ensure you have sturdy footwear and head protection.
- ❖ Might the work lead to a fall from height?
- ❖ Entry and exit: openings should be large enough to allow unobstructed access by people, including rescuers, wearing protective clothing and equipment such as breathing apparatus. If access is by means of ladders ensure they are in good condition and you are able to use them safely. See Part 5 for further information.
- ❖ Time & planning: ensure you are in good health prior to entering the space. Spend as little time as possible in the restricted space. Make notes outside once you have observed any evidence. If you feel yourself becoming fatigued leave the space, take a good break and drink plenty of water. Arrange another visit if appropriate.
- ❖ Ensure you have adequate lighting.
- ❖ Take extra care with footing: identify suitably boarded areas. Check with the building owner / occupier / caretaker about what is covering any surface. Never enter an un-boarded loft.
- ❖ Identify any potential electrical cabling or other utility. Never hold onto electrical cables or plumbing pipe work for support.
- ❖ Secure loose clothing which may snag or wear overalls.

Emergencies

You should make arrangements for emergency rescue before entering the restricted space. These arrangements will depend on the type of restricted space, the risks and the likely nature of an emergency. Emergencies may arise from slips and falls as well as the nature of the area. You need to consider the following:

- ❖ The number of people involved - it is rarely, if ever, appropriate for anyone to enter a restricted space without someone remaining outside to carry out the emergency arrangements.
- ❖ Communications - make sure someone outside the danger area will know if there is an emergency inside.



Part 11: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

What about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

PPE is often used as a way of managing a hazard. For example, goggles can stop dust and grit getting into your eyes and gloves can stop you from absorbing hazardous substances through your skin, give you a better grip and protect you from cuts and grazes. But in terms of risk management PPE comes as a last resort.

The last resort

PPE is a last resort because:

- It only protects the person wearing the PPE and not those nearby.
- The user must remember to put it on.
- It needs maintaining, storing correctly, cleaning and replacing regularly.
- It can also become a hazard in itself if not used correctly or is poorly fitting.

While bat workers often rely on PPE to help protect them from hazards it is vital you always think through the activity / task first and try to manage the risk in another way before solely relying on PPE. See Part 1 for further information.

PPE from Natural England

Natural England provides PPE **free of charge** to registered volunteers and trainees. All NE-issued PPE meets Health and Safety regulation standards. If you choose to source and purchase your own PPE and equipment please ensure you have the right standard (see below). As Natural England provides suitable PPE you will not be reimbursed for kit you have purchased yourself.

The following tables list the EN-standard PPE and other safety equipment most commonly used by VBRVs, issued and recommended by Natural England. This kit can be ordered by emailing the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.

Other safety equipment

| Equipment | Unsuitable if... |
|--|---|
| Hand torch | Flickering / dim light Draining battery quickly Very heavy |
| Head torch | Flickering / dim light Draining battery quickly Very heavy Unable to secure to head Not compatible with other essential PPE |
| First Aid kit | Out of date |
| Ladders | Non-compliant with EN131 No completed annual inspection |
| Stabilisation device or ratchet straps | No space to attach |

| PPE | For... | Preferred Standard | Unsuitable if... |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Gloves | Hazardous substances Contact with zoonosis disease, Rough surfaces | EN 374 and EN 388 2016 | Any tears or holes |
| Gloves - heavy duty | Sharp edges | EN 420:2003 + A1 2009 or BS EN 388 | Torn Too large |
| Goggles | Dusts, airborne particles contacting eyes | EN 166 1B 34 | Don't provide an adequate seal Scratched / impair vision Don't fit, too large / small Elastic loose |
| Coveralls (disposable) | Dusts, particles, fibres contacting skin / personal clothing | EN ISO 13982-1 Type 5 | Torn Missing fasteners Too big / small |
| Coveralls | Dusts, particles, fibres contacting skin / personal clothing | EN 340:2003 | Torn Missing fasteners Too big / small Not washed regularly |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Safety Helmet (hard hat) | Low ceilings, beams Being struck by falling objects Penetration by sharp objects | EN 397:2012 | Out of date Subject to impact / damage Not compatible with other PPE Too big / small |
| Bump cap | Low ceilings | EN 812 | Out of date Subject to impact / damage Not compatible with other PPE Too big / small |
| Safety boots | Slips Protruding sharp objects Anti-static | EN ISO 20345:2007 EN ISO 20345:2011 | Too big / small Excessive wear and tear Broken fastenings |
| Safety trainers | Slips Anti-static | EN ISO 20345:2007 EN ISO 20345:2011 | Too big / small Excessive wear and tear Broken fastenings |
| Knee pads | Hard surface for prolonged periods | BS EN 14404 | Too big / small Excessive wear and tear Broken fastenings |
| Hi-vis jacket | Hi visibility, low light conditions | EN471:2003+A1 2007 Class 2 | Dirty, too big / small |

Other optional PPE

Dust/Face Masks

Face Masks are provided as optional equipment only. The threat of dust, bio-aerosol, fibreglass and other hazardous substance inhalation is minimal if those substances are not disturbed. Dust/Face Masks do not provide full protection but will prevent large amounts of airborne matter from entering your mouth, nose and throat.

The optional dust/face masks Natural England provides conforms to EU safety classification EN 149 and follow protection class FFP1.

Fitting & using PPE

It is essential your PPE fits correctly:

- ❖ Goggles should not interfere with your vision or spectacles.
- ❖ Clothing, footwear, hats and gloves should be comfortable and not too loose.
- ❖ Optional dust/face masks fit securely around the mouth and nose.

You must always use PPE in line with the guidance provided by the manufacturer to ensure it works properly.

PPE must also be stored and cleaned in line with manufacturer's guidance.

Replacing PPE

If any item of your PPE falls into the 'unsuitable if' category above you can also get a replacement from us at any time by emailing the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.



Part 12: Driving

What are the hazards?

There are a number of factors which can increase the risk of injury whilst driving, including:

- ❖ Driving and using a mobile phone
- ❖ Driving when tired, e.g. after a long day at work or after a late evening roost visit
- ❖ Driving long distances without breaks
- ❖ Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs

The following potential outcomes could occur if the risks associated with driving are not addressed:

- ❖ Death or major injury caused by driving without due care and attention
- ❖ Imprisonment or fines for causing death or serious injury to others

Managing the risks

All drivers must:

- ❖ Have a valid driving licence for the type / class of vehicle they are driving. Driving licence photo cards have to be renewed every ten years.
- ❖ Seek advice, via DVLA, or their GP if they have (or think they have) a medical condition or disability that could have an impact on driving or travel.
- ❖ Inform Natural England if they are aware of a medical condition or disability which might affect their ability to volunteer safely, including travelling to roost visits.
- ❖ Inform their insurers that their vehicle will be used for the purpose of volunteering.

Adverse Weather Conditions

The chances of an accident or breakdown are increased during the winter as the weather can change suddenly and severely.

- ❖ Check local weather forecasts before starting any journeys as weather warnings indicate how bad the conditions are likely to be.
- ❖ Do not start journeys when weather conditions are extreme or when a severe weather warning has been given.
- ❖ Where journeys are not essential re-schedule visits, especially if you will need to use untreated roads.

If you must drive:

- ❖ Be prepared for the conditions, think about taking additional warm clothes, boots, a spade or shovel, a torch, a fully charged mobile phone, a first aid kit, water or a flask of hot drink) and a snack
- ❖ If you do get into trouble because of the weather, all the motoring organisations advise you to stay with your vehicle until help arrives. If you have to leave your vehicle to get help make sure it can be seen by other vehicles because abandoned cars can cause problems for rescue vehicles and snowploughs.

Breakdowns and Incidents

The driver of a vehicle is legally responsible for its road-worthiness whilst the vehicle is on a public highway. The Highway Code has several pages on the actions to be taken if you breakdown or are involved in an incident.

Driver Tiredness

Driving when tired may be the main factor in around 10% of all accidents. To stop this:

- ❖ Know your limitations
- ❖ Recognise early symptoms of driver fatigue, including irritation at minor delays and the behaviour of other road users

If you are becoming tired or feel unwell:

- ❖ Pull over
- ❖ Have a break away from the wheel of the car
- ❖ Drink plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic)
- ❖ Take a short nap or break (minimum 15 mins)

Mobile Phones

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving – this includes stopping and making or taking a call with the vehicle engine running.

Fitness to Drive

Drugs, both illegal and prescriptive, can impair driving skills and volunteers must not drive whilst under their influence. The law does not make a distinction between illegal use or misuse of drugs and over-the-counter or prescription drugs taken as directed by a medical practitioner.

Additional guidance

- [‘Tiredness can kill – Advice for drivers’](#) (DVLA document INF159)
- [‘How to drive in snow and icy weather’](#) (BBC News Advice).



Part 13: Reporting Accidents and Incidents (Near Hits)

By following the guidance within this booklet and the Risk Assessment instruction you will be better informed with regard your role and responsibilities as a VBRV. It is important to stress that accidents and incidents (Near Hits) are rare, however they do occur so it is important that you understand what to do if either should occur.

Reporting an Accident or Incident

You must report any accident, near hit or incident which occurs whilst performing or travelling to / from a roost visit to Natural England as soon as possible: Contact the Natural England incident reporting helpline during office hours on **0300 060 0100** and outside office hours on **0300 060 4451**.



Part 14: Feedback & Further Information

Feedback

If you have any feedback about this guidance or would like to see additions / amendments please get in touch by emailing the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.

Further Information

This manual has the following guidance documents embedded within the main content (currently these documents can only be accessed via a Windows computer):

- ❖ Risk Assessment.
- ❖ Role of the Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (for you and your buddy).
- ❖ Dealing with Violence and Aggression (for you and your buddy).

Embedding means you do not require access to the Internet to access the documents. If not automatically clear when you open this manual please follow this path to access the above documents:

View – Show/Hide - Navigation Panes – Attachments

If you have difficulty in opening the above attachments or you have a request for other guidance not listed please email the bat volunteer's mailbox at batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.

