

This risk assessment relates only to the *generic* features of a common activity; it does not cover those *specific* to a location or group. It therefore must not be used without completing the local review, making additions as necessary to take account of local circumstances. However, such a local review need not be timeconsuming. Use the box at the bottom to create the local review, or add extra pages as necessary. **SEE ACCOMPANYING SAFETY NOTES**

ACTIVITY ASSESSED		ASSESSOR	ASSESSMENT DATE
5. TREE FELLING, CROSSCUTTING AND DEBRANCHING, AND SCRUB CUTTING		STEPHEN BOLSOVER	13 th March 2024
For this activity a tree is defined as a woody plant over 2m tall with a diameter of 75 mm or more at breast height. As a quick rule of thumb, if the main stem can be cut with loppers the plant is a sapling, not a tree. We follow www.woodlands.co.uk in defining a small tree as one of diameter 18" (45 cm) or less. We are often called upon to debranch, crosscut and otherwise clear up trees that have already fallen. All the restrictions and precautions herein apply equally to fallen trees as to standing trees felled by volunteers.			
HAZARD	RISK LEVEL	PRECAUTIONS	
potential for harm Falling trees and flying wood	M	to remove hazard or reduce risk level. One precaution may tackle several hazards. Only small trees (up to 38cm diameter) may be felled by HNCF volunteers. Crosscutting is limited to trunks up to 38 cm in diameter. All workers to be briefed on safe practices. Wear hard hats when felling trees and make all aware of danger from deadwood in the canopy loosened by falling tree. Protect public by placing warning notices on all access routes and have one or more members of the party act as a lookout in case these signs are ignored or bypassed. Cease work in high winds.	
Injury to bystanders	M	When felling a tree all bystanders should be a distance away from the tree of five metres or twice the height of the tree, whichever is greater. When snedding a felled tree or cutting branches from a standing tree bystanders should be at a safe distance, at least 5 metres and more if the branch is large and might put them at risk if it moved or twisted in an unexpected way when cut. If as a result of felling work a tree becomes hung up and cannot be brought down safely using the equipment and personnel present then the entire at risk area around the tree must be clearly marked with red/white warning tape and "keep out" signs before HNCF personnel leave. Inform the council biodiversity officer / ecologist (Nick Bolton) or appropriate council officer. Arrange for contractors to make the tree safe, and until they come check the site regularly to make sure that the tape and signs are still in place.	
Causing traffic accidents and obstruction to traffic on roads	L	No trees are to be felled within a distance twice the height of the tree from a public highway. No snedding of felled trees or cutting branches from a standing tree within 5m or two branch lengths of a public highway, whichever is the greater.	
Trip hazards	L	Assess area before working and remind volunteers to be aware.	
Electrocution by overhead cables	H	Identify overhead cables on the first visit to the site and avoid working within distance from them of twice height of tallest tree. If unsure liaise with the local electricity authority.	
Chemical treatment of stumps	L	Chemicals are to be used only by volunteers who hold current PA1 pesticide certificates. COSHH procedure and any guidance on the product are to be followed.	

RISKS AND PRECAUTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE SITE OR DAY

ASSESSOR

ASSESSMENT DATE

APPLICABLE DATES

(This is likely either to be one specific day, or “until further notice”.)

Risk level: L = Low, M = Medium, H = High

ACTIVITY ASSESSED	ASSESSOR	ASSESSMENT DATE
5. TREE FELLING AND SCRUB CUTTING	STEPHEN BOLSOVER	24 th May 2017
For this activity a tree is defined as a woody plant over 2m tall with a diameter of 7.5 cm or more at breast height. As a quick rule of thumb, if the main stem can be cut with loppers the plant is a sapling, not a tree.		
RESTRICTIONS Only small trees (up to 38 cm diameter) may be felled by HNCf volunteers. Crosscutting is limited to trunks up to 38 cm in diameter. Felling, crosscutting, branch removal and all other steps in clearing up a felled or fallen tree must be by hand tools only unless the volunteer holds a current NPTC chainsaw certificate and is registered as a chainsaw user with our insurer (see activity 6 below). There must always be at least two people present during tree felling work. This means that, for example, if one person is injured there is another to phone or go for help. If a tree is hung up or otherwise is dangerous to the public then one person can stay at the site to warn passers by while the other goes to collect warning tape, create signs, etc. No work in high winds. Appoint lookouts able to warn members of the public and halt work if the public approach too close. Any chemical treatment of stumps must be carried out by a volunteer with a current PA1 pesticide certificate and must comply with COSHH procedures.		
PREVENTATIVE MEASURES Avoid working within distance of twice height of tallest tree from overhead cables, but if this is unavoidable liaise prior with landowner/client and electricity company.		
PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT Hard hats must be worn when felling trees.		
TRAINING All work to be preceded by a safety and techniques talk. No felling by those who have not been fully briefed on safe practice.		
MONITORING Inspect site before work for inherent hazards on the ground and for overhead cables, erecting warning signs and cordoning off as appropriate. Check that site is kept free of obstructions and waste is safely stored/ disposed of. Maintain safe working distances between participants.		
INFORMATION The assessment above states that if a tree becomes hung up and cannot be brought down safely using the equipment and personnel present, then before HNCf personnel leave the entire at risk area around the tree must be clearly marked with red/white warning tape and “keep out” signs. We can then arrange for contractors to make the tree safe. Volunteers must not be afraid or embarrassed to make the decision that more professional help is needed to address a dangerous tree: HNCf has the financial resources to pay professional contractors. We did this in 2021 when a tree became hung up at Stanmore Country Park. Signs saying “Danger, hung up tree, keep out of marked area” should go up immediately, before HNCf volunteers leave the area. Initially these may be simple sheets of paper taped or stapled to the red/white warning tape. However they should be replaced as soon as possible with laminated, weatherproof signs since it may be many days before we can arrange for contractors to deal with the problem. Council officers to contact: Biodiversity Officer / Ecologist – Nick Bolton <nick.bolton@harrow.gov.uk> 0780 556 86597 Tree officer: Ivana Turner <ivana.turner@harrow.gov.uk> Arboricultural Officer Rebecca Farrar at 020 8736 6092 <rebecca.farrar@harrow.gov.uk>		

Risk level: L = Low, M = Medium, H = High