

Organising a clean up

HINTS AND TIPS GUIDE



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BEAUTIFUL**

Here are some useful hints and tips to consider when organising a Clean Up.

Planning ahead

Decide where you would like to do your clean up. You could clean up and enhance a local landmark, or take action on a well-known 'grot spot'. Always get permission from the land owner for your activities. If you wish to clean up on council owned land, you will have to ask permission well in advance of your event as the process for approval may take some time.

At an early stage, decide on the arrangements for removal of the waste at the end of your event. Usually your local council will help by collecting the rubbish or providing a skip. If you are removing it yourself, ensure you are able to dispose of it at your local civic amenity site (i.e. council 'tip').

If a commercial waste company is collecting the waste or delivering a skip, they will charge you and want to know what the waste comprises of.

How will you carry out your clean up?

It could be a straightforward clean up or you could have a theme or set a challenge. Think of ways to make your event as much fun as possible. Should refreshments be provided? As a rallying point for the event, choose a well-known spot which will be familiar to everyone.

Risk Assessment

Having chosen a place for your clean up, visit the site and carefully identify all the risks that you might face while you are there. When assessing the risks, the following are examples of hazards that you should make a note of:

- Unidentified cans or canisters, oil drums, poisons, insecticides, clinical waste, other hazardous substances, broken glass, condoms, syringes etc.
- Deep or fast flowing water, currents or tides, steep, slippery or unstable banks, sharp rocks, mud holes, derelict buildings, busy roads, electric fences, etc.
- Yellow and / or red signs generally indicate a hazard, even if you're not sure what the symbols mean, take care to avoid areas marked with them.

If you think the area carries too many risks for you and your group, choose somewhere else.

Getting Help

The Cleansing, Environmental Health or Technical Services Department of your local council should be able to offer support by providing litter pickers, refuse sacks, gloves and may provide a skip at your event. If making your own arrangements to get the litter you've collected off site, take their advice on where to legally dispose of the waste.

Target local companies who may be able to support your clean up by providing materials, services or products. For example, fast food restaurants may be able to supply refreshments and supermarkets might donate bin bags.

The Clean Up Crew

You may already be part of a group wishing to do a clean up. If so involve them at the planning stage and make it a real team effort.

If you plan a large scale clean up perhaps you could drum up some support from other groups in your area; schools, uniformed youth, civic society, rotary clubs, tenants associations and environmental groups are just a few of the many who could be interested in making an impact on their local environment.

Community Involvement

If you want to involve a wide range of volunteers from different sectors of the community in your clean up:

- Approach local residents either by leafleting, calling at homes or through a resident's group.
- Put up posters in local shops and supermarkets, in libraries, community and leisure centres, citizens advice bureaus, schools and on church notice boards.
- Send out a press release to your local media calling for volunteers well in advance of your event with details of whom to contact and how people can get involved.

- Contact your local council to see if they have a volunteer bureau or speak to your local community volunteer service who can help find volunteers and offer advice.

Equipment and preparation

The following arrangements will have to be made and equipment organised prior to your clean up.

You will need a supply of refuse sacks and other clean up equipment will come in useful, depending on the nature, type and size of your event and the resources available to you. Your local council may be able to help you with some of the following:

- As well as refuse sacks, clean up equipment could include litter pickers, gloves (water proof or heavy duty), wheelbarrows, rakes and shovels.
- For any scale of clean up event, have a first aid kit and anti-bacterial wipes (remember to let your volunteers know who the first aider is).
- For a large scale event you could contact your local ambulance service or voluntary first aid organisations such as the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance for advice. They may even be able to provide cover and assistance.
- If you are likely to come across hypodermic needles or drugs related litter, have a contact number for the council who will organise a rapid response for their removal. Do not touch these yourselves.
- A skip or other means of efficient removal of collected rubbish after your event is useful.
- If supervisors need to stay in touch, mobile phones or walkie talkies will be required.
- Arrange specialist help such as the council, police, fire brigade, armed forces or a professional company if clearing abandoned cars or heavy objects.

Protective gear and Equipment

Make a list of useful equipment and work out who will provide what. Check if any volunteers can provide their own equipment. Your local council may also be able to help or advise on obtaining protective wear or equipment.

Preparations

As organiser, you will have visited the site and carried out a risk assessment before the event. It may be helpful to make a sketch map of the area to be tackled. Note where the skip or litter collection points should be. If you are expecting a large number of people, you may also want to identify a 'lost and found' point and a first aid point. Mark on the map the location of any toilets, the nearest public phone and any other useful



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We'd like everyone to show that they Live Here and Love Here by playing their part. What does that mean? How can you take part?

Well.....that's up to you! We think it means looking after the place you call home. You can do a range of simple things to help like not dropping litter, cleaning up after your dog or sprucing up a local green-space. Every little helps! You might think it's about something else entirely. It can be about doing something little (or big!) Do the things that you would like to see other people do for you. What would you do to brighten your day?

Building a sense of civic and community pride and responsibility will take time but can start with the smallest of positive actions.

Pledge your support today at www.liveherelovehere.org

amenities such as cycle or car parks, bus stops or train station. You might also note places where you could shelter from the rain if the weather turns against you. This map can then be used on the day to show different groups where they should be working, the set up for the day and the facilities available.

Informing, instructing and organising

All volunteers will need to be informed and instructed prior to the event. Depending on the nature, size and type of event, this may include:

- Health and safety risks (these will be determined by the risk assessment carried out and the risks defined).



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The **BIG Spring Clean** is Northern Ireland's largest clean up that renews community pride in our country and heritage. By cleaning up we reduce the financial burden on rate payers, improve the environment and encourage tourism and job creation. In 2016 over 107,000 volunteers lifted over 298 tonnes of litter from our beautiful landscape.

- Precautions to avoid these risks and how to protect against them.
- How to use any equipment provided.
- The agreed area or route and event procedures.
- Where and when to meet, including start and finishing times.
- Advise volunteers in advance to dress for the occasion. Strong, comfortable boots or shoes will be needed; perhaps also warm, waterproof clothing and head gear. Gloves are essential if litter picking by hand. Fluorescent arm bands or clothing should be worn if working in poor light or anywhere near traffic.
- Location of toilet facilities and refreshments (depending on the length of your event).
- First aid arrangements.
- The location of the nearest telephone or access to a mobile phone.
- Volunteers should be advised not to overfill their bin bags as this can result in difficulties with lifting them and could be a potential manual handling risk.
- Great care should be taken when removing sharp objects such as glass or thorny branches in bags as someone lifting or carrying them could end up getting cut if they are unaware as to what exactly is in the bag.

Be considerate

If you are working in the country, parks, woodland or open spaces, avoid disturbing animals or damaging plants. Keep gates closed and don't clean up natural 'rubbish' such as logs, stones and weeds. They may look untidy but they are home to animals and birds.

Before your clean up, get some advice from an expert; your local council may be able to give you a contact name. Make sure your activities don't interfere with people in the vicinity who are not involved in the litter pick. In particular, tell volunteers not to go on to other people's property.

Avoiding danger is important

- Suspicious items that may include weapons and explosives
- Do not touch or handle any suspicious objects or items you may encounter during your clean-up activity.
- DO immediately move away from the object, evacuate the area and call Police using 999.
- Try to prevent anyone from going near the object but do not put yourself or others in danger
- Ensure the person finding the object remains available to talk to the Police.

Hazardous Waste

Make sure everyone is aware of potentially dangerous items which they should not pick up.

If nasty or dangerous pieces of litter such as unidentified drums, cans or canisters of chemicals, poisons or insecticides or syringes are spotted at any stage during your litter pick, do not attempt to move them yourself. Make a note of their location and inform your local council.

Asbestos is another harmful waste material and can come in the form of three colours; white, brown and blue and can be found in many building products. It is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral and can come in all shapes and sizes and is best left untouched until it is removed by a reputable licenced contractor. Please make a note of the location of any hazardous waste that you find and inform your local council.

Natural Dangers

Avoid holding your litter pick near potentially dangerous places such as steep or slippery banks, fast flowing water or derelict buildings.

Line pins and tape can be used to section off any potentially dangerous areas. For a large operation, a loudhailer could be useful to warn participants to stay within the designated area.

Take particular care of children and don't attempt too much.

Consider the ages of the children involved in your clean up and make sure that a sufficient number of adults are present to supervise. In the case of young children we advise a working ratio of no more than four children to one adult.

However, ratios can differ when other factors such as the activity involved, the children's age range and disabilities are taken into account. It is strongly advised that these factors should be considered when drawing up the group risk assessment before the clean-up takes place. It is also suggested that if the group is a mixed gender then it would be best to have both male and female adults included.

Before the clean up, make sure children understand which items are potentially dangerous and should not be picked up. Warn them not to pick up any items that they are the least bit unsure about. But also be aware that very young children may not heed your warnings. Don't let children attempt to pick up heavy or bulky items. Ensure that they have adult help for any weightier tasks.

If you are working anywhere near roadways, canals, rivers, ponds or beaches, make sure that there are responsible people appointed specifically to keep an eye on the safety of the children involved.

With children, do no more than a one hour stint. If only adults are involved, attempt only what is within everyone's capacity and allow for rest breaks. Two to three hours of litter picking is usually enough unless you're extremely dedicated.

Other dangers

Giant hogweed and native hogweed

This is an 'injurious weed' and can cause harm to people and animals. Great care should be taken when working near this weed and it should not be touched at any time. Seek immediate medical advice if skin comes into contact with the weed and irritation, rashes or blistering could occur. Further Information available online:

- www.invasivespeciesireland.com
- www.nonnativespecies.org
- www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/giant_hogweed.pdf

Weil's Disease (*Leptospirosis*)

This is a very rare infection carried in rats' urine and can be fatal. The symptoms include high temperature, severe headaches, flu-like illness or muscle pains. They will appear three to nineteen days after exposure to contaminated water. It must be treated early.

Adopt[®] A Spot

Adopt a Spot, bust that grot! Is there an area in your community that could do with a clean up? Are you fed up of unsightly graffiti, litter and dog mess on your doorstep?

Why not **Adopt a Spot!** The area you choose to adopt can be anywhere from your local street, a section of beach or local park or even your school grounds. If you feel like you need to change your spots, then why not **Adopt a Spot!**



The **Clean Coast programme** in association with Coca-Cola, aims to improve the quality of coastal areas, rivers and loughs by promoting volunteering opportunities. The programme includes a week of dedicated action promoting clean up events and other activities on beaches and inland waterways and Volunteer Awards.



Protective Clothing (photo courtesy Tom Richards – Wye and Usk Foundation GB Non-Native Species Secretariat website.)



Giant Hogweed Stem (courtesy RPS Group Plc via GB Non-Native Species Secretariat website)

Fly Tipping

If you discover fly tipping, see someone fly tipping or come across dumped or hazardous waste, report it to the local council.

Insurance cover

Obtaining public liability insurance is very important and not very expensive. This will provide cover for your legal liability during the event, including damage or injury to a member of the public or their property.

If you represent an organisation such as a local council, school or business it is possible that you already have insurance in place but it is important to check that litter picks/clean-up activities are covered under such insurance. If not, a suitable extension should be made to the policy.

It is advisable not to sign any contract or give indemnities without first referring to your insurance broker or insurer as this could affect or invalidate your insurance cover.

Only events directly organised and led by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful staff are covered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful public liability insurance.

How to use a risk assessment

To run a safe and fun clean up event it is best practice to complete a risk assessment before each clean up event.

The following risk assessment will help you identify the potential hazards in the area and how to take the necessary precautions to avoid the risk of accidents or injury. By filling in the form on the next page it will also help you to give a safety talk at the beginning of your event.

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember:

- a hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders 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.

Follow these five guidelines to successfully complete your risk assessment:

- 1. Identify the hazards**
- 2. Decide who might be harmed and how**
- 3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions**
- 4. Record your findings and implement them**
- 5. Review your assessment and update if necessary** (for example wet weather may change the hazards)

An example is shown in the risk assessment template.

- All volunteers should be made aware of the associated risks. Provided all volunteers are relatively fit, the above should not prove to be overly hazardous. However as there is much bending and lifting of objects all volunteers should be reminded of their physical limitations.
- All volunteers should have up to date tetanus vaccinations.
- All participants should be wearing suitable clothing.

Remember to have fun at your clean up, stay safe and let us know how you get on. Happy litter picking!

If you have any queries or would like more information about volunteering opportunities in Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful please contact us on **028 9073 6920** or **enquiries@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org**

Risk Assessment

Date:		Name of activity leader:		
Activity:		Location:		
Persons potentially at risk:		Nearest Hospital:		
Site Access:		Car Parking:		
Identify the main Risks/Hazards that volunteers could potentially face	Worst case outcome	Estimation of risk (Low/Medium/High)	Current Precautions taken to avoid such risk	Comments
<i>Example: Sharp or pointed objects</i>	<i>Cuts and scrapes</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Protective gloves and litter pickers to be used.</i>	<i>Ensure adult supervision</i>
Further precautions:				
Have all members received a health and safety briefing (on the day)?				
Where is the nearest telephone? Does a mobile phone work?				
Is there a first-aider and kit available (on the day)?				
Is there a sharps box available (on the day)?				
Nearest vehicular access				
Nearest toilets				



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If you would like more information on BIG Spring Clean, Adopt A Spot, Clean Coasts or other volunteering opportunities please contact:

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