

Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Last updated:	December 2022	By:	Emma Dunn	Suggested next review	September 2024
Description:	<p>Activities taking place during Forest School sessions involving tool use e.g. cutting logs, pruning branches and other vegetation, whittling, splitting wood.</p> <p>Higher supervision levels will be necessary for younger children and individuals with additional needs.</p>				

Billhook risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Injury during billhook transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury.	Children, adults and staff	<p>All billhooks are kept in sheaths when not being used.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly</p>	2	2	4		<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

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Billhook slipping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance. Kept sharp and useable.</p> <p>No glove to be worn on hand holding the tool to prevent slipping. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it so if a slip occurs it will not make contact with any member of the group and self.</p>	2	4	8	Adult supervision	<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Billhook bouncing off when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance. Kept sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using to reduce the likelihood of a bounce occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self</p>	2	4	8	Adult supervision	<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
Billhook blade snapping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Regular and effective maintenance of tools.</p> <p>The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.</p>	1	3	3	The group should know that if a problem has occurred with a tool it should be reported immediately to the leader.	<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

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Billhook storage	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool	Children, adults and staff	<p>All billhooks kept in sheath when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined</p> <p>The group should be made aware that they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.</p>	2	2	4		<p>FSL - designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Bow Saw risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Injury during bow saw transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All bowsaws kept in sheaths when not being used Ensure group have a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly in its designated holder	2	2	4		FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Bowsaw slipping when being used	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self	2	4	8	Adult supervision	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Bowsaw blade snapping	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Regular inspection and maintenance of tools to ensure safe to use. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.	2	3	6	The group will be informed of how a blade should look and that if a problem has occurred with a tool it should be reported immediately to the leader.	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Bowsaw trapping hand when being used	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Hand guards on tools. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. Ensure the group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it.	3	2	6	Adult supervision	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (glove), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Bowsaw storage	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool causing injury	Children, adults and staff	<p>All bowsaws kept in sheaths when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined</p> <p>Ensure the group have a full understanding on how they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.</p>	2	2	4		<p>FSL – designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Sheath knife risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Sheath knife transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All sheath knives are kept in sheaths when not being used Ensure that group has a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly.	1	4	4		FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Sheath knife slipping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. No glove on the using hand to prevent slipping. Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self	2	4	8	Adult supervision	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Sheath knife blade snapping	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Regular inspection and maintenance of tools to ensure safe to use. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.	2	4	8	The group will be informed of how a blade should look and that if a problem has occurred with a tool it should be reported immediately to the leader.	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Sheath knife storage during a session	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All sheath knives to be kept in sheaths when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined Ensure the group have a full understanding on how they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.	2	4	8	Adult supervision	FSL - designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Secateurs risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Secateurs transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All secateurs are kept in protective carriers when not being used Ensure that group has a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly.	2	2	4		FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Secateurs slipping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. No glove on the using hand to prevent slipping. Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self	2	4	8	Adult supervision	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Secateurs bouncing off	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. No glove on the using hand to prevent slipping.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using and its capacity to reduce the likelihood of a bounce occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self</p>	2	2	4		<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
Secateurs breaking	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Regular inspection and maintenance of tools to ensure safe to use. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool.</p> <p>The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.</p>	1	3	3	The group should know that if a problem occurs with a tool that it should be reported immediately to the leader.	<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

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Secateurs storage during a session	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool causing injury	Children, adults and staff	<p>All secateurs are kept in protective carriers when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined</p> <p>Ensure the group have a full understanding on how they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.</p>	1	3	3	<p>FSL - designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Loppers risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Loppers transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All loppers are kept in protective carriers when not being used Ensure that group has a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly.	2	2	4		FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Loppers slipping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self	2	4	8	Adult supervision	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Loppers bouncing off	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable.</p> <p>Ensure the group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly and its capacity to prevent the tool failing to cut and bouncing off.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using and its capacity to reduce the likelihood of a bounce occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self</p>	2	2	4		<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
Loppers snapping	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	<p>Regular inspection and maintenance of tools to ensure safe to use.</p> <p>The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.</p>	1	3	3	The group should know that if a problem occurs with a tool that it should be reported immediately to the leader.	<p>FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

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Loppers storage during a session	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool causing injury	Children, adults and staff	<p>All loppers are kept in protective carriers when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined</p> <p>Ensure the group have a full understanding on how they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.</p>	1	3	3	<p>FSL - designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Pruning saw risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Pruning saw transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury	Children, adults and staff	All pruning saws kept in sheaths when not being used To ensure group have a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly in its designated holder	2	2	4		FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Pruning saw slipping when using	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Tool maintenance to ensure the tool is sharp and useable. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self	3	3	9	Adult supervision	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Pruning saw blade snapping	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Regular inspection and maintenance of tools to ensure safe to use. Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. The leader will decommission any tools with defects or seek to repair.	1	3	3	The group will be informed of how a blade should look and that if a problem has occurred with a tool it should be reported immediately to the leader.	FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Pruning saw trapping hand	Cuts and lacerations to skin	Children, adults and staff	Protective glove to be worn on the hand not using the tool. Ensure the group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it.	2	2	4		FSL - briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (glove), monitor / guide during School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Pruning saw storage during a session	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool causing injury	Children, adults and staff	<p>All pruning saws kept in sheaths when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined</p> <p>Ensure the group have a full understanding on how they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.</p>	1	3	3	<p>FSL - designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff - reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers - reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
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Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Mallet risk assessment

Hazard / activity	Harm/risk factors	People at risk	Primary control measures	P	S	R	Additional control measures / action required	Who/when
Mallets	Knocks to hands, tripping over	Children, adults and staff	Tool talk before any tool use, including a designated tool storage area and demonstration of use of tool. Mallet should be used in pairs with one person holding the billhook and the other using the mallet (if splitting wood). Tools to be stored in a protector if appropriate.	2	3	6	Additional adult helpers. Model behaviour. Adult supervision.	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Injury during mallet transportation	Tripping with tool in hand causing injury.	Children, adults and staff	Ensure group have a full understanding on how to carry the tool correctly	2	2	4		FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheaths), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

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Mallet slipping when using	Bumps and bruises	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance. Kept useable.</p> <p>No gloves worn to prevent slipping.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using it to reduce the likelihood of a slip occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self</p>	2	4	8	Adult supervision	<p>FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>
Mallet bouncing off when using	Bumps and bruises	Children, adults and staff	<p>Tool maintenance. Kept useable. No gloves worn on tool hand to prevent slipping.</p> <p>Ensure group have a full understanding on how to position the tool correctly when using to reduce the likelihood of a bounce occurring and contact being made with any member of the group and self</p>	2	4	8	Adult supervision	<p>FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during</p> <p>School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during</p> <p>Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during</p>

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Mallet snapping when using	Bumps and bruises	Children, adults and staff	Regular and effective maintenance of tools. The leader will decommission any defected tools or seek to repair.	1	3	3	The group should know that if a problem has occurred with a tool it should be reported immediately to the leader.	FSL – briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (tool maintenance, glove), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during
Mallet storage during a session	Tripping over, kicking or someone putting their hand down on the tool	Children, adults and staff	All tools kept in storage area when not being used. A designated tool storage area out of the way to be defined The group should be made aware that they should place the tools in a safe place to avoid injury when temporarily not in use during an activity.	2	2	4		FSL – designate appropriate area briefing before activity, provision of or guidance on safety equipment (sheath), monitor / guide during School staff – reinforce briefing, provision of safety equipment (if necessary), monitor / guide during Adult helpers – reinforce briefing, monitor / guide during

Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Explanatory notes:

- **Hazard** – anything that can cause harm or potential to cause harm
- **Harm** – caused by hazard. The potential harm is what that hazard may cause. If the hazard is working on ladders then impact with ground will be the harm
- **People at risk** – those likely to be affected by the hazard
- **Existing preventative measures** – what is already in place to prevent that hazard from causing harm, such as, policy and procedure, barriers to prevent access etc.
- **Risk** – is the chance high or low that somebody will be harmed by the hazard.
- **Probability** – the likelihood that the hazard will cause harm
- **Severity** – the seriousness of the incident that may be caused
- **Rating** – the probability multiplied by the severity gives a figure from 1 – 25. Any hazard scoring above 12 will need to have immediate additional control measure put in place to prevent a serious accident.
- **What measures need to be taken** – additional control measures that need to be put in place to reduce and further minimise the risk. These may be immediate or a process to be done over a longer period of time (possibly carried out by the group i.e. brashing trees to prevent eye injuries).
- **Who / when** – a record of who is responsible for implementing any action relating to that hazard

Severity	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Probability					

Rating	
16 - 25	Very high – do not proceed unless substantial additional measures (seek approval)
12 - 15	High – ensure adequate immediate additional measures
6 - 10	Medium – consider addition measures
1 - 5	Low – proceed

P (Probability of injury 1 - 5) x S (severity of injury 1 - 5) = R (consequential risk - PxS, 1 - 25)

Tool risk assessments for Forest School

Severity	
5	Major accident - multiple serious injuries or fatality
4	Serious injury / multiple injuries - requiring immediate medical attention.
3	Injury - requiring non-immediate professional medical attention.
2	Minor injury - basic first aid administered. This would include minor cuts, bruising, abrasions and strains or sprains of ligaments, tendons, muscles.
1	Not serious - no first aid required

Probability	
5	Almost certain - very likely to occur (>95% chance)
4	Probable - more likely than not to occur (75% chance)
3	Possible - has the potential to occur (50% chance)
2	Remote - unlikely to occur (25% chance)
1	Improbable - very unlikely to occur (<5% chance)

P (Probability of injury 1 - 5) x S (severity of injury 1 - 5) = R (consequential risk - $P \times S$, 1 - 25)