



# Within the Wood

## Emergency Congregation and Evacuation Procedures

There are instances where the whole group may need to congregate immediately and in certain circumstances, leave the site, for instance a missing person, severe weather, a serious first aid incident or another unexpected danger. In these circumstances the following procedure will be followed. This policy applies to all staff (including subcontractors and volunteers) working at Within the Wood. When work is contracted by another organisation e.g., a school or community group they are referred to in this document as the Partner. The senior member of staff on a session

### Before the session:

- The lead member of staff will be aware of where there is a mobile signal (or public phone if none), the location of the site (postcode or map reference) and where is the nearest point of access for the emergency services. These will be on the site risk assessment and discussed in the briefing.
- Members of staff will ensure their mobile phones are charged at the beginning of every session.
- All members of staff will be aware of the number of participants in the group.
- A register will be taken and kept in an accessible file, along with emergency contact details for all participants. (On contracted projects this will be the responsibility of the Partner).
- At the beginning of the session a meeting point or base will be identified, e.g., a shelter or tree. The meeting point should be easily identified e.g., the place the group leaves bags or next to the fire circle.
- The group will be rehearsed in the calls used to identify their location and to bring them back to the meeting point (e.g., the 'EYUP!' call and response, blowing the viking horn).

### In the event of a fire:

- See 'Fire Safety Risk Assessment'

### In the event of a need for an emergency congregation:

- A call will go out to bring the group back to the meeting point.
- A head count will be done by 2 different adults and checked against the numbers on the register.



- Providing all participants are accounted for, the leaders will explain the situation and what the group needs to do.

### In the event of a participant going missing:

- Leaders follow the emergency congregation procedure.
- If anyone is missing, one leader will stay with the group while the senior leader or leaders go to find the missing person.
- The remaining group must stay together. They will be taken to a secure area to wait if there is a danger to them by remaining on the site.
- If the missing participant cannot be found, the contact person (e.g. parents) for the missing person should be informed and a discussion should be had about whether it's appropriate to contact the police. In most cases, parents and carers know the child best and will be able to assess whether their child is likely to return of their own accord or whether there are significant concerns for their safety.
- Parents/carers are responsible for contacting the police, but the session leader can contact the police on their behalf if they agree.
- Directions from the emergency services will be followed whilst the senior leader continues the search.
- If the parents do not want to contact the police, only contact them if you consider the parent's decision to be unreasonable and the child is at significant risk of harm.
- Leaders will stay with the group and offer reassurances and comfort.

### In the event of an emergency evacuation:

- Leaders follow the emergency congregation procedure.
- If anyone is missing leaders follow the missing participant procedure.
- Following this, a call will be made to the emergency services if required and directions from the emergency services followed.
- If all participants are present, the group will follow a leader out of the site to a secure area.
- Once in the secure area, leaders will stay with the group and offer comfort and reassurances and ensure the safety of the group.
- In the event of a thunder and lightning storm the group will leave the site and find shelter inside a building where possible. We follow the Rospa 30/30 rule: if there is a direct lightning strike within 30km of our site, we seek shelter in vehicles and stay in for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder-clap. Staff have an app on our phones which alert us if there is a strike within 30km.
- Where not possible to find shelter indoors the group will divide up and shelter in an area of small trees surrounded by taller trees or in a depression or ravine. In a worst-case scenario, the group will find open space away from trees, fences and poles and



adopt the lightning strike position (crouch down balancing on balls of feet, place hands on knees and head between them) to minimise the contact with ground.

- If necessary, parents /carers will be called, and all participants ticked off the register as they leave the site. (On contracted projects this will be the responsibility of the Partner).

### In the event of an unwanted trespasser on the land:

- One member of staff speaks to the person and explains that there is a session running and they cannot linger. The other staff member(s) ensure that participants stay away from the trespasser. It must be noted that the woodland sites used by Within The Wood may have a public footpath running through them, so occasionally members of the public may pass through. All members of staff should be aware of where any public footpath runs, and that members of the public have right to pass through using only the footpath. Members of the public cannot watch or join the session.
- If a member of staff has any concerns about the trespasser, or the trespasser refuses to leave the areas follow the emergency congregation procedures.
- If there is a missing person, follow the missing person procedure.
- If the threat posed by the trespasser is putting the participants in danger, if it is safe to do so, the emergency evacuation procedure will be followed and if necessary, staff will call the police.

### In the event of a serious first aid incident:

- One of the leaders will call the emergency services giving clear, concise instructions regarding the location of the incident e.g., postcode or map reference and road /air access points. The other leader will assist the wounded individual and the other participants will be asked to congregate at a meeting point away from the individual.
- Walking wounded will be escorted from the site to an area accessible by the emergency services.
- Emergency services will be directed to immobile casualties through clear instructions to the emergency service operator and by locating staff or responsible participants near road / air access points to lead the emergency service personnel to the casualty.
- If helpful, a friend will stay with the casualty to offer comfort and support.
- A leader will keep the rest of the group suitably occupied and away from the casualty.
- If the casualty is a member of staff, the first aider will see to the staff with all children within site at a meeting place (e.g. the shelter).
- A member of staff will inform the parent or carer of the casualty regarding the incidents and accompany the casualty to hospital, taking the casualty's health and



contract details with them. (On contracted projects this will be the responsibility of the Partner).

- Remaining staff should decide regarding continuing the remainder of the session based on the circumstances of the incident, whether there is a remaining danger and how it affects ratios and morale in the group. (On contracted projects this will be the responsibility of the Partner).

### In the event of the business needing to close due to extreme events:

In some extreme cases sessions may have to discontinue, e.g. forest fire, public health incidents, a disaster in the local community. If the incident involves the site no longer being safe to use, a new site will be secured as soon as possible. In any case where sessions can no longer run, parents and staff will be informed of the changes and a full explanation of why these have happened by text/WhatsApp/email/. In the event of sessions not being able to run, Within The Wood will provide Forest School activity ideas on their social media accounts if these activities are still safe to do in the circumstances, so parents can continue to give Forest School provision to their children at home.

In exceptional circumstances, an emergency could create high levels of workforce absence which may lead to having to prioritise places in setting. Priority should be given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Sessions may have to be cancelled if DBS checked staff or volunteers are not available to cover the sessions.

In some rare cases parents/students/staff may not agree with Within The Wood's decision to stop running sessions. In this case a phone call can be made to discuss the reasons of the closure, and they will be shown current government guidance in relation to the emergency.

### Key contacts and advice:

- Emergency services: 999. In the event of a serious first aid incident, consider asking for mountain rescue if the environment requires it. All incidents at Ponden Wood will need mountain rescue if the casualty cannot move.
- Yorkshire and Humber Health Protection Team: 0300 303 0234. Contact for advice about disease, chemical and radiation hazards.
- Health and Safety Executive: [Managing risks and risk assessment at work – Overview -HSE](#)
- MindEd, mental health advice following an emergency: [MindEd Hub](#)

Signed:



Date: 18/05/25

This policy will be reviewed in May 2026