



HEALTH & SAFETY

Risk Assessment Guidance for Building and Repairing Cornish Hedges

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Clothing / personal needs / tools / handling stone / site / roadside hedges / general

BUILDING AND REPAIRING CORNISH HEDGES RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

(As discussed with HSE, in line with best practice)

The basis of health and safety law is the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Under this Act a hedger has to be able to prove, in court if necessary, that what he has done was “as far as is reasonably practicable”. The hedger is likely to avoid trouble if he has followed the advice in this leaflet.

There are many government Regulations which give legal advice on health and safety. Some of this advice is compulsory, some of it is voluntary and this does not have to be followed, especially if it is unreasonable. But if there is an accident, the hedger is held to blame unless he can show that what he did was reasonably practicable. A small number of the compulsory Regulations apply directly to Cornish hedging.

Clothing.

Safety boots and appropriate wet-weather gear. Eye protection (usually safety spectacles) is advised where stone is being split or dressed. Anti-tetanus cover has to be up to date. Always have a packet of assorted plasters available.

Personal needs.

Toilet and changing facilities must be reasonably available. Having a mobile phone is sensible for hedgers working alone.

Tools.

The traditional Cornish shovel is best; when correctly handled, it reduces strain and avoids bending. Club and sledge hammers, long and short bars, and cold chisels, should be available. Other tools are needed if there is a lot of top-growth to be dealt with. Each tool

must be in a condition fit for the use to be made of it.

Handling stone.

A hedger can always handle stone reasonably practicably without strain by using the method most appropriate for the job.

1. Using a tractor or digger is best for transporting stone any distance and for moving large or heavy stones.
2. Rolling, skidding or walking a stone instead of carrying it. Many hedgers transport stone short distances on a barrow or sack truck.
3. Levering by bars, pick-axe or gently by shovel. Several types of bar are needed, from a small wrecking bar to a 2m heavy bar.
4. Pushing or lifting and dropping in place with tractor or digger bucket. Pulling by machine or hand winch.
5. Moving and dropping using a tripod and chain pulley (test certificate required) .
6. When a stone is suspended by chains from tractor bucket or pulley, it should not be approached while the chains are in tension. Stones should not be approached except by the person(s) actually handling them.
7. Lifting stones by hand (adapted from www.betterbacks:hse.gov.uk):-

Your first step should always be to consider using a handling aid.

If you have to lift the stone yourself, start with a good posture. Resist stooping or squatting, it's better slightly to bend your back, hips and knees.

Adopt a stable position. Feet should be apart with one slightly forward to maintain balance.

Get a good hold. Hug the stone, ideally with the heaviest side next to your body.

Avoid twisting your back or leaning sideways, especially when your back is bent.

Look ahead. Once the stone is held securely, don't look down on it.

If you need to adjust your grip on the stone, put it down first.

The hedger is legally required to see that the most practicable method is used for each stone. Stones are often of awkward shapes, and learners have to be taught how to handle them safely.

Site.

A zone at the hedge bottom of at least 1m wide along the hedge must be kept clear of stones.

Roadside Hedges.

Special arrangements must be made to warn traffic of any obstructions.

General.

On each site the hedger should mentally assess the risks involved before he starts work. Where conditions are potentially unusually hazardous, the hedger should, for his own legal protection, make a written risk assessment before work starts. Where there is other work on the same site, the relevant health & safety precautions should be observed.

There are other health & safety aspects of living an ordinary life which are relevant to every worker. These should always be taken into consideration, and someone at home should always know where the hedger is working each day.

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Titles of Occasional Papers available (or forthcoming) on www.cornishhedges.com

Building Hedges in Cornwall	Literature Sources
Building and Repairing Cornish Stone Stiles	Mediæval Hedges in Cornwall (450AD - 1550)
Butterflies, Moths and Other Insects in Cornish Hedges	Modern Hedges in Cornwall (1840 - present day)
Caring for Hedges in Cornwall	Mosses, Lichens, Fungi and Ferns in Cornish Hedges
Check-list for Inspecting New or Restored Hedges in Cornwall	Post-Mediæval Hedges in Cornwall (1550 - 1840)
Check-list of Types of Cornish Hedge Flora	Prehistoric Hedges in Cornwall (5,000BC - 450AD)
Code of Good Practice for Cornish Hedges	Repairing Cornish, Stone and Turf Hedges
Code of Good Practice for Stone Hedges	Risk Assessment Guidance - Building and Repairing Cornish Hedges
Code of Good Practice for Turf Hedges	Roadside Hedges and Verges in Cornwall
Comments on the © Defra <i>Hedgerow Survey Handbook</i> (1st Edition)	Technical Note for Pipeline and Other Cross-country Operators
Comments on the © Defra <i>Hedgerow Survey Handbook</i> (2nd Edition)	Technical Note on Hedges for Site Developers in Cornwall
Cornish Hedges in Gardens	Technical Note for Working on Roadside Hedges
Fencing Cornish Hedges	The Curse of Rabbits in Cornish Hedges
Field Hedges and Margins	The Life and Death of a Flailed Cornish Hedge
Gates and Gateways in Cornish hedges	The Menace of Rampant Weeds in Cornish Hedges
Geology and Hedges in Cornwall	Trees on Hedges in Cornwall
Glossary of some Cornish Words used in the Countryside	Unusual Old Features in Cornish Hedges
Hedges in the Cornish Landscape	Who Owns that Cornish Hedge?
How Old is That Cornish Hedge?	Wildlife and the Cornish Hedge