

Sandbagging Safety Tips

Safety tips associated with sandbagging are the following conditions:

- Repetitive and heavy work
- Overexertion
- Dehydration
- Heavy equipment
- Overexposure to the sun
- Floodwater
 - contamination
 - strong currents
 - floating debris
 - hidden hazards (submerged objects, flooded holes)

Steps that you can take to minimize the potential hazards associated with sandbagging:

- Do not volunteer if you have a medical condition that would make it dangerous for you to participate
- Arrive at the site wearing appropriate clothing/footwear as it will get dirty. We recommend:
 - slip and water resistant footwear (e.g., work boots, rubber boots, etc.)
 - gloves
 - full-length pants (no shorts)
 - long sleeved shirt and jacket (for weather conditions)
 - sunglasses, hat, and sunscreen
- Use sunscreen, sunglasses, etc. to avoid overexposure to the sun
- Do not use any personal electronics requiring head phones, e.g. iPods or MP3 players – they can prevent you from hearing warnings or instructions
- Do not wear jewellery, e.g., rings, watches, bracelets as these items could get caught and cause injury
- Follow directions of the site leader
- Take rest breaks to avoid overexertion
- Drink plenty of fluids to remain hydrated
- Flood waters may be contaminated – always wash after working in these areas – always wash hands before eating, using restroom facilities, smoking, etc
- Be aware of large equipment moving in the area

Sandbag handling techniques:

- Use good bag handling technique – sandbags weigh approximately 18 kg (40 lbs). Injuries to you or other volunteers may not be immediately noticeable
 - never throw sandbags – always pass them
 - keep your back in a neutral posture (never bend more than 20° in any direction)
 - avoid twisting the spine – pivot by moving your feet (always remember “toes before nose”)
 - keep sandbags as close to your body as possible
 - keep sandbags between your knees and shoulders as much as possible



Most sandbagging activities will not require working close enough to moving water that there is a danger of falling in. Volunteers should only be near moving water at the specific direction of the site leader. If you do have to work this close to moving water, you should:

- Wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD)
- Always work in pairs
- A 50' lifeline attached to a life preserver/buoy is also recommended