

Volunteer Accident Reporting Guidance

**Introduction**

As a Community Volunteer with Dorset Fire and Rescue Service we have a duty of care towards you.

Therefore all of the activities you are given the opportunity to undertake will be subject to a risk assessment. The risk assessment is designed to ensure that any activity you undertake is as safe as reasonably possible.

Whilst we acknowledge our responsibility towards you as a Community Volunteer, you bear a responsibility for yourself and anyone you work with. You must adhere to any training or instruction you are given, apply any restrictions placed on your activity as a result of a risk assessment and report any accidents or near misses that occur during your volunteering activities.

This guidance note is designed to explain what you should do if you are involved in either an accident or near miss. DFRS treat the safety of our volunteers as a high priority and as such it is imperative that accidents and near misses are reported at all times.

**What is an accident/adverse occurrence and what is a near miss?**

An **accident** is often referred to as an unplanned, undesired event that caused injury, ill health (mental or physical), loss or damage.

A **near miss** is an unplanned, undesired event that could have resulted in harm or loss (an accident). For example if someone were to slip on a wet floor but not sustain an injury we would regard the incident as a near miss.

For ease the term **adverse occurrence** will be used throughout this guidance note to refer to all accidents or near misses.

**Why do I need to report all adverse occurrences?**

The importance of reporting all events that have or could have resulted in an injury to individuals, damage to equipment or property should not be underestimated. The information gathered is vital to ensure that future accidents or injury are avoided by highlighting any deficiencies in our procedures or equipment.

We recognise that not all hazards are foreseeable, those that are, need to be fully risk assessed to avoid accidents. Those that aren’t and result in an adverse occurrence need to be properly investigated to prevent a reoccurrence. They can only be investigated if they are reported.

**What do I do if I witness an adverse occurrence?**

If you are involved in or witness an adverse occurrence you should:

* Make the area safe in an attempt to prevent a reoccurrence or take whatever steps necessary to prevent the situation worsening.
* If trained, provide first aid to any casualty and summon an ambulance if necessary.
* If appropriate preserve the scene as far as practicable. If it is not appropriate or practicable to preserve the scene then record as much information as you can; make notes or sketch maps with approximate dimensions included.
* Check any equipment or vehicles involved for safety and prevent any further use if necessary.
* Inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

This process must be followed for all adverse occurrences involving yourself or third parties. This includes any individual or group of individuals visiting or working on Service premises.

All road traffic accidents involving Service owned vehicles involved on journeys related to volunteering activities and third parties should also be reported in the same way. If you are involved in a road traffic accident whilst using your own vehicle for volunteering activities we do not need a report completed unless an injury is sustained either by yourself or a third party. If the result of the accident is confined to material damage to vehicles this will be dealt with by your insurance company in the usual way.

**What happens when I report an adverse occurrence?**

The Volunteer Coordinator will guide you through the process and assist you to complete the appropriate forms, e.g. DFRS 800 Accident/Near Miss, in accordance with our Service procedure (HS 04).

They will then ensure that the report is forwarded appropriately and will liase with the Service on your behalf.

In line with the Service procedure an appropriate level of investigation will take place into the adverse occurrence.

The purpose of any investigation is to factually and accurately identify the cause of the incident and not to apportion blame. The primary aim is to learn from the experience and to prevent a reoccurrence. We will use the information gained from the investigation to contribute to the Service’s overall objective of seeking continuous improvement, whilst maintaining a safe working environment.