

Off Campus Activities and Fieldwork Risk Assessment Guidance

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1.0	22/8/2023	First issue of guidance
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3		
4		
5		

1. Introduction

Fieldwork is a regular part of work and study at Swansea University (SU), so it is important all staff and students undertaking fieldwork are aware of the potential risks and follow the required guidance and procedures to help keep themselves and others involved or affected by their fieldwork safe. Fieldwork extends to anything from attending a conference to undertaking more traditional fieldwork in an outdoor setting.

As with other activities, fieldwork comes with its own risks, therefore it is essential you follow the requirements of the University's Fieldwork policy and plan your fieldwork in a timely manner to ensure all risks have been considered and controls/ arrangements, including emergency plans and plans for any form of disruption are in place, to allow the fieldwork to go ahead safely.

This document provides step by step guidance on how to complete a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for fieldwork, and the level of approval required.

The University has the right to refuse any proposal for fieldwork on grounds of health and safety or for other operational or academic reasons as appropriate. Any student or staff member who leaves the University without approval to travel, work, or study is unauthorised and not covered by university insurances.

2. Risk Categories

Fieldwork/ Research/ Activity			
Very Low Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff only - attending meetings and conferences in the UK where the location(s) visited will hold their own suitable and sufficient risk assessments as part of normal business operations. 	Low risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student fieldwork involves activities such as a meeting, desk work, attendance at a seminar, conference or exhibition/ museum held in a controlled environment (e.g., a business or academic institute, hospital). Research in another institution that is low risk for 	Moderate risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other fieldwork (unless activities include those outlined under the High-Risk section). Hiking and Ecology Fieldtrip in Brecon Beacons National Park. 	High Risk: <p>This is not exhaustive list and if you are not sure on your level of risk you should speak to your Faculty H&S Lead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fieldwork involves activities, such working on or near deep water, snorkelling, excavation, caving/ potholing, climbing, abseiling, construction site activities,

	<p>example desk based or has been risk assessed by the host and those host risk assessments have been shared with everyone partaking in the research.</p>		<p>working at height.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching a highly sensitive/controversial topic that could put the individual in danger. • Means of communication available to the fieldworker are non-existent/restricted. • Fieldwork is in remote areas that are difficult to access in an emergency. • Where emergency response/medical facilities are severely limited. • Where any participant characteristics could significantly increase their vulnerability to certain risks.
<p>Fieldwork Risk Assessor</p> <p>UK ONLY STAFF ONLY</p> <p>Acknowledges and has access to the White form – which details risk considerations for very low risk trips in the UK.</p>	<p>Fieldwork Risk Assessor completes:</p> <p><u>For Fieldwork in the UK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green form - Fieldwork in the UK 	<p>Fieldwork Risk Assessor completes:</p> <p><u>For Fieldwork in the UK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Form – Fieldwork Risk Assessment form (moderate/high) 	<p>Fieldwork Risk Assessor completes:</p> <p><u>For Fieldwork in the UK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Form – Fieldwork Risk Assessment form (moderate/high)

	<u>For International Fieldwork</u>	<u>For International Fieldwork</u>	<u>For International Fieldwork</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to travel and International Travel Risk Assessment form as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to travel and International Travel Risk Assessment form as appropriate Red Form – Fieldwork Risk Assessment form (moderate/high) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to travel and International Travel Risk Assessment form as appropriate Red Form – Fieldwork Risk Assessment form (moderate/high)
Approval required by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self -approval 	Approval required by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line Manager/ Supervisor 	Approval required by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line Manager/ Supervisor Head of department/ Programme Director 	Approval required by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line Manager/ Supervisor and Head of School/ Director of PSU OR Head of L&T/ Research When in combination with moderate or high-risk international travel additional approval is required: International Travel Guidance

3. General Information

Before completing the risk assessment, the fieldwork risk assessor (leader/ solo participant if working alone) should be able to confidently undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of the fieldwork risks. The fieldwork assessor must have received appropriate risk assessment training and/or have relevant fieldwork experience. The risk assessment must be completed by the fieldwork leader/ solo participant and cannot be delegated.

The form to be completed depends on the level of risk (see risk categories above).

3.1 Title and Type of Fieldwork

In these sections, include a description and goal of the fieldwork, e.g., collection of samples, observation of animals/ environment, interviews with human participants, etc., and details of the activities performed. This will give the approver an insight into the fieldwork that you want to undertake and the risks they need to review.

3.2 Level of risk of Fieldwork/ Research (Moderate/ High only)

Use the risk table above to determine what the risk level of the fieldwork you are planning to undertake is. This will determine who is the final authoriser of the fieldwork and what fieldwork form to complete.

3.3 Insurance

If you are undertaking your fieldwork internationally, you must also complete the relevant international travel risk assessment forms. The forms can be found: [Staff/ Students](#).

Please check that the activity you are planning to undertake is insured under SU cover. Swansea University Cover Staff - [Insurance webpage](#), Students - [Insurance webpage](#).

You can contact the insurance team at Insurance@Swansea.ac.uk

4. Location and Communication

4.1 Location of fieldwork

List the general location if it is easily identified and easily located on a map i.e., street name/address is sufficient in this instance. For all other locations, a national grid reference (NGR)/ or global positioning system GPS location is preferred.

4.2 Mobile phone coverage

There are a number of webpages you can use to determine mobile phone coverage in an area, although it is not guaranteed, it is a good indication of whether you may need alternative means of communication during your field work. e.g., <https://www.gsma.com/coverage/>

4.3 Local Contact Details

If you are staying with or working with a local person as part of the fieldwork, record their contact details here in case of emergencies.

4.4 Satellite Phone

For some fieldwork it will be essential to carry a satellite device, this isn't limited to fieldwork overseas as there are some areas of the UK that have zero network coverage for a few miles. Where contact with emergency services may be extremely difficult then consideration for use of a satellite phone should be made as part of the risk assessment.

Please know how to contact the emergency services using your satellite phone, many do not allow you to call 999 directly. Have your GPS/ NGR location ready to give to the operator and do not rely on the satellite phone to pinpoint your location, this could give a location of a few hundred kilometres. The University do not hold satellite phones as a central resource, and they should be funded from a faculty or project budget.

4.5 Radio

Radio communication is helpful when working in groups that are separated by more than talking distance or when signal is poor. Ensure everyone in the group has their radio set to the same channel. Remember that the media and others can listen into the radios so be mindful what you are saying over them.

4.6 Nearby Facilities

By law you have to consider what welfare facilities are available and provide adequate access to these facilities. This includes toilet arrangements that are suitable based on the location of the fieldwork and the ability to wash hands before eating and drinking.

4.7 Downtime/ Side Trips

Where there is a potential for all or some of the party to take part in other activities e.g. other recreational activities then these need to be listed, university insurance must be informed to check if additional cover needs to be provided. Additional activities should also be risk assessed.

Definitions

Personal Time is defined as time when programmed activities are not taking place, but participants remain under the general jurisdiction of the University and therefore are covered by university insurance. It is unlikely that participants will be directly supervised during these periods. Common examples of personal time activities include organised sightseeing, social activities, and outings.

Down Time is defined as a period of time, occurring before, after or within the overall duration of the activity/ fieldwork, but outside the jurisdiction of the University e.g., a personal trip to visit friends or relatives or site of interest to the individual not relevant to the international travel activity/ fieldwork and not covered by University Insurance.

4.8 Swansea University Contact

Complete this section prior to departure for fieldwork in the UK. If travelling internationally these details are captured on the international travel forms. This is your main contact at the university who will be available to accept any calls/ communication and manage/monitor your agreed check ins.

The frequency of the check in and the mode of communication e.g., mobile phone, text message, email, WhatsApp should be agreed prior to travel and will depend on the level of risk of the activity or needs of the individual traveller. The frequency of check in should be proportionate e.g., for low-risk travel and low-risk activity such as attending a conference this could be a phone call when you arrive and when you are home. If carrying out a high-risk activity a higher level of communication should be agreed with your university, contact before travel.

A plan should be put in place in the event the traveller/group leader fails to make contact as agreed. It is important to check in following a serious/significant event e.g., hurricane, to confirm they are OK.

4.9 Accommodation Details

Complete these prior to departure for fieldwork in UK, if they are not known at the time of completing the risk assessment they must be completed prior to departure, if travelling internationally these details are captured on the international travel forms. Accommodation risks should be assessed as part of the risk assessment. There is a form in appendix 2 to support the assessment should you need it.

4.10 Personal Emergency Contact Details

Complete these prior to departure for fieldwork in the UK. If travelling internationally these details are captured on the international travel forms

In this section you will need to provide details of your personal emergency contact. This should be completed if you are a sole participant or the group leader. This information will be collected on the participant information form for group information. The personal emergency contact details should be the person you are planning to keep in contact with when carrying out fieldwork and who should be contacted in case of an emergency e.g., next of kin. This information must be shared with the SU contact/Faculty and vice versa in case of an emergency e.g., if you have failed to check in with your personal emergency contact, they can contact your SU contact and vice versa.

All details should be stored in a place that can be readily accessed by the Faculty/ PSU incident team should there be a need to do so.

4.11 SafeZone App

How to download:

Go to www.safezoneapp.com and follow the simple instructions for your device.

Once you have downloaded the free app, simply enter your swansea.ac.uk email address, select Swansea University, then follow the easy on-screen instructions.

Settings for SafeZone Abroad

Before travelling you should check that the SafeZone app you have downloaded covers the country you are traveling to by:

- Opening SafeZone app.
- Open the menu on the left.
- Select regions, there will now be a list of the areas/counties SafeZone currently covers.
- If your area/ country is not covered, please e-mail the Security managers Security@Swansea.ac.uk and request the areas/countries to be included prior to your departure.

Remember

If anyone changes the sim card in their phone for a local card, SafeZone will still work but the university will not be able to contact you unless you update the phone number in your personal profile in the SafeZone menu.

It is advised when you arrive at the field working site use the “check in” facility to confirm your arrival. Then phone SU Security +441792604271 so we can confirm we have received the signal. Then you can check back out.

You will be required to check back in if there is major incident (e.g., natural disaster) in your locality. This is so the university knows you are safe and well and can offer assistance.

Configuration

Once you are operating from away from a campus location the SafeZone alert button are reconfigured as detailed below:

Open the SafeZone App

Tap on one of the three alert buttons and wait for the timer to stop (Note: to skip the countdown in an emergency, tap the alert button 5 times fast)

Your alert will be sent, and a member of the response team will be in touch to confirm your location and provide assistance.

Once your alert has been dealt with you can end it by pressing the cancel button.

If you press an alert button by mistake, don't worry, you have 5 seconds to cancel it by tapping the button again. If you do this, no alert will be sent. If the alert is sent and someone calls back, please answer. even if it was an accidental press!

If you don't feel able to talk, you can use the chat function by pressing the blue speech bubble icon when your alert has been raised.

If you have no WiFi or mobile data, the app will try to send the alert as an encoded SMS. Follow the steps on screen to do this.



Figure 8, containing screen shots and information on the SafeZone App

5. Fieldwork Risk Assessment

A suitable and sufficient fieldwork risk assessment should be prepared and completed in a timely manner before leaving to ensure everything is in place prior to departure. It should identify and record foreseeable hazards and significant risks associated with the planned activities, including dealing with sick or injured persons, availability of emergency services where this is limited. The risk assessment should clearly identify what precautions need to be put in place to ensure the risks once controlled are acceptable, how and by whom any actions required will be taken. The risk assessment it should detail the timescale for outstanding actions to be completed.

The risk assessment process should be closely integrated with the planning of the fieldwork. The following provides examples of considerations that should be taken as appropriate (this is not an exhaustive list):

5.1 Activity

Consider your activities and list any hazards and controls connected to these activities e.g.

- How are any samples collected?
- Observation of animals/environment, are dangerous animals, plants and microorganisms likely to be encountered?

- Interviews with human participants, etc Conducting research late at night, in crime hot spots, in remote locations or with vulnerable persons in their homes/care facility.
- Lone working
- Hostility of the environment
- Potentially hazardous activities to be undertaken (e.g., diving, rock climbing and caving).
- Research (other than in the field)
- Working on or near deep water
- Working at heights
- Rigging, shoring/trenching/igging/entering excavations, caves and other confined spaces
- Dangerous substances likely to be handled or shipped (chemical, biological, GM, explosive etc.)
- Modes of transport associated with the activity and their associated hazards, choice of route, driver, time of travel etc.
- Climatic conditions (bearing in mind seasonal changes), bad weather alternatives and escape routes.
- How using expensive equipment could make you more vulnerable.

5.2 Equipment

Consider the tools or equipment that will be used to access the research site or during research activities and the risks, limitations and controls that are associated with each piece of equipment used. You will also need to consider any qualifications or training required to use the equipment/tools and list either as essential or desirable for example.

- Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and GPS failure.
- Sharps (knives, razor, needles)
- Hand tools
- Chainsaws
- Power tools
- Heavy machinery
- Tractors
- Speciality equipment
- Life jackets and other PPE
- Lasers
- Portable welding/ soldering devices
- Other hazardous equipment or tools
- Any other potential research-associated hazards e.g.
- Using drones
- Dangerous substances likely to be handled or shipped (chemical, biological, GM, explosive etc.)

Transport

What vehicles will be used during the field operations? And consider any insurance, qualifications or training required to use these vehicles and list either as essential or desirable. For example.

- Chartered boat,
- Paddle craft e.g. canoe/ kayak
- Car /minibus/ van
- All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV),
- Truck with trailer

- Snowmobile
- Chartered plane
- helicopter

5.3 Participants

Many factors need to be considered when assessing the level of supervision required for any fieldwork. Supervision requirements will vary tremendously, for example an inexperienced group of first year students will require a higher level of supervision than would be necessary for postgraduate student level.

See [USHA Safety in Fieldwork guidance](#) for further information (section 13).

USHA no longer recommend an accepted basic standard; however, the supervision and ratio levels are to be decided at risk assessment stage to ensure that there is suitable supervision and contingency for each party adequate deputising provision should be made for the leader and driver(s) in case of incapacity.

- Appropriate level of fitness, in this case fitness would be defined as 'ability to meet the demands of the environment'
- Any participants who have pre-existing medical conditions/ allergies/ pregnant or new and breast-feeding parents have considered how their medical condition/ requirements will be managed and have appropriate arrangements in place. A more detailed risk assessment may be required in this instance.
- Enhanced Health Declarations are completed where required by the faculty.
- Any additional needs of participants have been discussed and considered prior to departure
- As part of the risk assessment any planned activities including activities carried out in personal time/free time, must be considered as part of the risk assessment. The participant must also ensure that adequate insurance is in place to cover such activities carried out in free time.
- Consider the arrangement for personal hygiene and welfare such as:
 - Handwashing/ personal hygiene/ toilets
 - Supply of wholesome food
 - Access to drinking water, does everyone require a water bottle?
- Any specific needs of participants can be supported and met

5.4 Accommodation Safety

Accommodation safety cannot always be determined prior to departure, use this section to ensure the accommodation you have chosen is safe and suitable for all the participants on the field trip. Use appendix 1 to determine the safety and suitability of the accommodation on arrival.

Fire Safety

Considerations may include:

- Is the accommodation situated on the ground floor or is the means of escape in the event of fire more complex? (E.g. involve internal corridors and stairways?)

- Are fire doors well maintained and present on all rooms leading onto the main escape routes?
- Is adequate fire signage in place to enable escape in an emergency?
- Are all final exit doors unobstructed and kept unlocked from the inside?
- Is an automatic detection system in place which would alert sleeping occupants to the presence of a fire?
- Are there any manual break glass call points to alert people to a fire?
- Is there a fire alarm panel you can be shown?
- Can you see emergency lighting?
- Are fire extinguishers visible with an in-date test date on them?
- Does electrical wiring appear to be in good condition?
- Are there any sources of fire which enhance risks e.g. oil lamps, flammable liquids used for cooking

Gas and Electrical Safety

It is very difficult to establish the integrity of gas and electrical installations without being competent to check the suitability of certificates. However, if the following are observed this should warrant further investigation:

- Obvious faults with electrical systems e.g. loose wires, overloaded sockets, exposed wiring behind sockets, lighting on two core cable, evidence of scorching
- Gas boilers in the room without a carbon monoxide alarm.

Security

- Are all final exit doors to outside secure from intruders?
- Do bedroom windows lock from the inside?
- Do bedroom windows have means to prevent intruders whilst allowing ventilation?
- Are groups accommodated together?
- Is outside lighting adequate?

General Building Issues

- Are all balcony fences at least 1m high?
- Are stair carpets in good condition?
- If a swimming pool is on site, is it in good condition, is the depth marked up, is the water clear and treated, is rescue equipment available?
- Are there handrails on the staircases?

Local Environment

- Is the accommodation located in an area which is recommended from a safety perspective?
- Is it possible to use public transport safely to get to planned destinations?

5.5 Controls/ Mitigation

Risk assessors should follow the hierarchy of control when identifying controls, please see Risk Assessment Information Sheet on [Staff H&S Page](#), [PG H&S Page](#)

A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should ensure that exposure to hazards is prevented so far as reasonably practicable. If not prevented, exposure should be controlled and where appropriate these controls can include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Fieldworkers should be advised of the type of clothing and footwear needed for the field. If specific equipment is required for fieldwork activity the organiser must ensure that all participants have the correct equipment, clothing and where required suitable PPE. PPE should be selected based your risk assessment to ensure:

- It is fit for purpose.
- Provides adequate protection from the hazard e.g. Life jacket is tested and fits correctly, and the user is competent in donning and doffing.
- Is compatible with other items of PPE
- It complies with European Standards (CE mark) and UK Standards UKCA mark
- Is adjustable (or made to measure) and comfortable to wear.
- Training may also be necessary to ensure people know what checks they need to make, how to store it and maintain it etc.
- Service records are available for the equipment.

Other controls can include:

- Limiting “downtime” and organise activities for personal time where possible.
- To confirm fitness i.e., the ability to meet the demands of the environment, all participants (including staff and students) to complete a medical declaration.
- Consider any basic or specialist first aid requirements for the activities and who are trained (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - Fully trained – First aid at work (3 days)
 - Emergency First Aid – Basic Life Support (1 day)
 - Mountain First Aid Trained
 - Mental Health First aid
- Downloading SafeZone. If you do not wish to download SafeZone as a control, you must include this in your risk assessment with alternative control measures.
- Undertaking a predeparture briefing with the group of participants to communicate the risks, controls and where applicable behavioural expectations of the group.

Decommissioning of fieldwork

Following the completion of a fieldwork project all traces of Swansea University should be removed from the site and any equipment returned to the University. (All projects should consider the impact on the site both short and long term). It is the responsibility of the fieldwork leader and line manager/ supervisors to ensure if research is finished/ abandoned for any reason the site is decommissioned if safe to do so. Decommissioning of fieldwork should be included in your fieldwork risk assessment

Debrief

Following the completion of fieldwork, it may be necessary to organise a debrief session, where any concerns, lesson learnt, or the identification of wellbeing issues can be addressed. This should form part of the fieldwork review. A debrief session should always be held for the first trip to a new location.

6. First Aid Requirements

This section is for recording who in your fieldwork team are the qualified first aiders as identified as part of your risk assessment. The certificate should be checked, and expiry date included to ensure all training is up to date for the planned activity.

Where the activity includes a group of participants, a first aider must be present. The level of first aid training will depend on the activity and should be included as part of the assessment of the risks.

Consideration should also be given to any specialist equipment not normally required in a basic. First Aid Kit (e.g., sterile saline, foil blankets, bothy bags). All participants must be informed of the arrangements for first aid, the location of facilities when on fieldwork, who the first aider(s) is/ are and the reporting mechanism following an accident.

7. Training and Competency

Use this section to list any training or competency requirements needed for participants. This is not restricted to H&S training but can encompass other competencies to.

The fieldwork risk assessor (leader) and approver should be checking to ensure that these have been achieved before fieldwork departure.

8. Emergency Planning

Nearest Hospital (to field working site)

You should include estimated transport time, contact information and basic driving directions from the site to the nearest provider of emergency medical care. The address including postcode should be included and map (where possible) with specific directions. This is particularly important if you/ participants have any pre-existing medical conditions or are Pregnant, New & Breastfeeding Person's.

Emergency Evacuation plan

This section should be completed if extraction from site to a hospital is difficult e.g. it may need a specialist team or equipment e.g. Mountain Rescue, Coastguard, 4x4 or Helicopter evacuation etc.

9. Fieldwork Contingency Planning

Contingency plans should be developed to ensure all leaders and participants know what to do if the fieldwork leader or participant becomes unable to lead the group for any reason, for example should the participants:

- Continue the activity safely
- Return to accommodation
- Fieldwork will be cancelled, and group is to return to Swansea University

The contingency plans should also include if there are any financial implications if there is any disruption to the fieldwork/ research and should ensure there are adequate funds available and accessible.

10. Equipment List

This section is to list any equipment that is required for the fieldwork. The list should be as comprehensive as possible as it will assist with planning your fieldwork and act as evidence to insurance should equipment be lost, damaged or stolen on the trip.

11. Brief Itinerary

This should be completed and updated before departure to be as accurate as possible.

12. Fieldwork Declarations

The declaration made by the fieldwork risk assessor is confirming that you have:

- Carried out the appropriate research for your fieldwork/ research and have completed a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks involved.
- This document, and additional participant details (if required) are stored and accessible to Swansea University Contact and Faculty, prior to departure.

13. Fieldwork Authorisation

The University has the right to refuse any proposal to carry out field work on grounds of health and safety or for other operational or academic reasons as appropriate. Any student or staff member who leaves the University without approval to, work, or study is unauthorised and not insured.

The authorising signatory must have read and be assured that the risk assessment is suitable and sufficient to control and mitigate all risks associated with the fieldwork, considering the benefits of the fieldwork balanced against any significant residual risk remaining.

If fieldwork is arranged jointly between one or more faculties/PSUs, a shared risk assessment and authorisation should be undertaken.

14. Participant Information

This must be completed by all participants who are part of a group, taking part in fieldwork. This form is used for both international travel and fieldwork so will only need to be completed once.

Appendix 1 – Accommodation Safety

Accommodation Safety cannot always be determined prior to departure, use this section to ensure the accommodation you have chosen is safe and suitable for all the participants on the field trip.

Field Course Leader Accommodation Safety Checklist

If it has not been possible to verify the safety standards of accommodation through an approved travel agent, completing this form using the fieldwork guidance document is one method you can use to help establish whether acceptable standards are in place.

Please complete the table below, *if required*, to confirm that an assessment has been completed:

☐ This is not required

	Checked	Comments
Fire Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Building Safety Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	

☐ I have completed the review and consider that the accommodation is safe to use.

☐ I have considered and noted relevant points to include in the fire brief to fieldworkers on arrival.

☐ **This accommodation must be assessed on arrival.**

Appendix 2 – Accident Reporting **only to be used when online form is inaccessible*

An accident report should be completed as soon as possible following an incident. As the usual method of reporting is online, during fieldwork the online portal may not be easily accessible, so it recommended you keep at least one copy of the accident reporting form on you.

What is being reported?	
Date:	Time:
Brief Details (What, where, when, who and emergency measures taken):	
Details of Injury (Person):	
What first aid was administered:	
Damage (Equipment/ Property/ Habitat):	
Witnesses (Name, Occupation and Tel No):	
Who was involved in the adverse event?	
Full Name:	
Age and DOB:	
Occupation/Course of study (if student):	
Job Title:	
University Faculty / PSU or Employer:	
Email:	
Tel:	
Full Name:	
Status:	
SU Staff/ Student number:	
Visitor:	
Other (specify):	
Has the adverse event resulted in an absence from fieldwork?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, for how long?	
Reported by:	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Tel:	
Email:	
Date	