Risk assessment form for bat surveys at hibernation sites

This provides a suggested approach to assessing risks at a site. If you have your own risk assessment form that meets your specific requirements then you may wish to use that instead.

Section A of this form includes a checklist of potential hazards and risk prevention/control methods that may be relevant to a range of different types of site surveyed for hibernating bats. Please note that the checklist is not intended to be completely exhaustive and is for guidance only, so please assess the site carefully and consider any risks not on the checklist. There are blank rows at the bottom of the table so that additional risks that are identified at a site can be added to the list.

Section B provides a format for completing a risk assessment for an individual site. This is strongly recommended as each site is unique and must be assessed individually. If in doubt about any aspect of the health and safety relating to a site, always seek further advice from someone who is familiar with the site or has expert knowledge of that type of site. Please remember that as a volunteer you are under no obligation to take part in this survey. You should not put yourself, or others, in danger.

- Degree of risk = severity of risk, i.e. being struck by a falling rock would be “High”, soiled/damaged clothes would be “Low”
- Adjusted degree of risk = likelihood of severe risk if prevention/control measures are taken
- If the “Adjusted degree of risk” remains “High” then the survey must not be carried out

- Copies of this form are available from the Bat Conservation Trust (nbmp@bats.org.uk, 020 7820 7179) or downloadable at: http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/hibernation_survey.html
- Please do not return the completed form to BCT but keep a copy on file for your own future reference.

NBMP site code*	Site name	Date of risk assessment	Name of person carrying out assessment

*If applicable

Other relevant information

Nearest hospital emergency departments:

Address			
Telephone			

UNDERGROUND EMERGENCY – DIAL 999, ASK FOR POLICE AND THEN CAVE RESCUE

A. Checklist of potential hazards and prevention/control measures			B. Risk assessment for this site			
Hazard	**Nature of risk**	**Suggested prevention/control measures**	**Relevant to this site? (Y/N)**	**Degree of risk (Low/Medium/ High)**	**Prevention/control measures taken**	**Adjusted degree of risk (Low/Medium/ High)**
1. Weather/climate conditions						
Cold/wet conditions	Getting cold/wet – risk of hypothermia	Wear warm waterproof clothes, bring change of clothing and emergency rations; use waterproof bag				
2. Site conditions						
Rock related risks	Being struck by falling rock	Wear hard hat; avoid dislodging loose stone or other materials. NB Rock fall can happen inside and outside the cave.				
	Roof collapse	Expert advice should be sought on the stability of sites; do not enter unstable structures				
	Colliding with rock and other obstructions	Wear hard hat, kneepads etc.				
	Getting stuck	Avoid going into confined spaces; never work alone				
Water related risks	Falling into water – risk of drowning	Note weather conditions for at least 24 hours before going underground, particularly into caves or mine systems prone to flooding after heavy rain; one member of the survey team must be familiar with layout/conditions of site				
Falls	Falls from height from collapse of floor	Expert advice should be sought on the stability of sites; do not enter unstable structures				
	Falls from height from openings in floor	One member of the survey team must be familiar with the layout of the site				
	Falls and slips/trips	Wear appropriate footwear, bring a good torch to illuminate any trip hazards and proceed with care				

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General hazards	Injury rendering an individual unable to exit site	Ensure at least 4 people are in group: 1 to remain with injured person, 2 others to go and get help				
	Cuts/grazes	Wear strong gloves, knee pads; bring first aid kit				
	Bumping head on low ceiling	Wear hard hat and proceed with care				
	Soiled/damaged clothes	Wear sturdy old clothes/overalls, kneepads etc.				
	Industrial waste, eg. dumped chemical drums	Be wary of such hazards; avoid areas which have been used as dumps; if you come into contact with waste materials, wash hands thoroughly; seek medical advice if illness follows working near waste materials				
Environmental hazards	Hazardous gases, lack of oxygen	Expert advice should be sought on the safety of sites; do not enter sites where such hazards may occur				
	Explosions from ignition of flammable gases	Expert advice should be sought on the safety of sites; do not enter sites where such hazards may occur				
Geographical	Getting lost	Obtain plans of mine workings in advance; do not enter sites alone (minimum group size: 4 people); always remain within sight and shouting distance of each other; tell someone who can raise alarm if necessary where you're going and what to do if you're not back on time				

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Biohazards	Weil's disease (Leptospirosis) – a particular threat near water	Avoid immersion of open cuts in water and avoid ingestion. Ensure cuts and scratches are covered with waterproof plasters or micropore tape and any new injuries are thoroughly treated. Seek medical advice if illness follows work near water especially if injured or following immersion in water. Wash hands before eating or touching mucous membranes (mouth, nose etc.)				
	Tetanus	Ensure tetanus vaccination is up-to-date. Ensure cuts and scratches are covered with waterproof plasters or micropore tape and any new injuries are thoroughly treated				
3. Equipment						
Lack of training/experience	Accidents using specialist equipment	Do not use specialist equipment (eg. ropes, ladders) unless you have appropriate training/experience and insurance				
Technical factors	Torch failing	Bring spare batteries and spare torch				
	Battery leaking	Take care that batteries for torches etc. cannot cause damage to belongings if acidic content leaks				
4. Other factors						
Human factors	Risk to/from other people in area	Be wary of other activities in and around the site, eg. biking; access gates, lids etc. should be closed on entry and again on exit to leave the area safe for others				

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	Risk of attack (eg. if caves/mines have any public access then drug users, vandals etc. may be present)	Do not work alone. Ensure good reporting system and carry a mobile phone (NB mobile phones of limited use due to difficulty of getting signal within confined spaces; consider using 2-way radios)				
5. Additional risks at this site (add in below)						