

Health & Safety Guidance for using Water-Fed Poles

This information is provided for the general education of those using Gardiner water fed pole products and can be used to help every user to assess their risks in use and how to manage such risks. This is not a risk assessment or a method statement but can be used to assist in the creation of a professional contractor's risk assessment and training.

Risks associated with use of WFP pole equipment:

Electrical Conductivity Risks

The poles feature insulated and isolating handle sections, however when working with a water-fed pole there is always a risk that the water inside the pole hose or other hose connections can conduct electricity, even if the pole handle being held is insulated. Also, if working in wet conditions the wet pole can conduct electricity.

Always check for overhead power cables before use - carbon-fibre poles are good conductors of electricity. Do not work within a zone of power cables that would allow the pole to contact the cables if the pole was to be lowered in any direction.

Do not work in thunderstorms – lower any pole and pack away as soon as is practical.

Skeletal & Muscular Damage Risks

Repetitive strain injury can occur when carrying out any tasks of a repetitive nature. Ensure that where possible the legs and whole body are used to move and operate the pole. Ensure that no single movement or task is continued for longer than needed. Take regular breaks.

Ensure that the pole is being used at an angle that easily allows you to look up at the building. Do not work for any extended period too close to the building. A minimum ratio is 4:1 (height: distance) from the building for short periods; ideal is 3:1 or 2:1 for long term work.

Ensure that any pole weight, extended height, and brush weight is within your realistic capabilities and experience.

Avoid working in high winds with high level poles. It is good practice when working at heights, with any increased speed of wind blowing, to lower the pole before walking it round a corner or between high buildings.

Potential Risks to Third Parties

If a pole is allowed to get out of control and fall it can cause extensive damage to person and property. The most likely cause of this is if the operator trips, slips or falls when moving with the pole extended.

When moving a pole – check the route before moving any distance. If working at height above 40ft it is advised that a second operator is on hand to assist with hose management, obstruction observance and for the safety of others present on site.

Hoses can cause a trip hazard. Ensure that hoses only cross walkways when essential. Ensure that hoses are laid flat when crossing walkways and are well signed, indicated, or covered. Ensure that all hose colours used, meet minimum hazard requirements of visibility for the working environment.

Freezing water can cause a slip hazard to walkway users both during and after the cleaning process is taking place.

General Guidance

Always carry out a risk assessment before using any WFP equipment – even if working at low level.

Assess the property for any risks present – examine ground conditions, high level hazards and building condition.

Inspect the WFP equipment for signs of wear or damage prior to carrying out a work session. Do not work with damaged or faulty equipment.

Ensure that the property being worked on meets your 'standard working condition' requirements and has not changed since the last visit.

All operators should have received training on use of WFP equipment. Operating poles over 40ft requires extra strength and skill and should only be undertaken by those deemed competent & well trained.