

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 233

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Health & Safety

Dear All

Introduction

This Officers' Newsletter is largely about the serious subjects of Health & Safety and Risk Assessments. These are things that you are already aware of and know about but perhaps have not formalised.

If we follow a clear process then this will not be onerous, requiring a little careful thought about what we are doing, how we do it and what risks might be involved so that we can either eliminate or mitigate for any apparent risks in what we do.

It is important that we take formal steps to show that we have carried out the necessary checks, considered the likely risks, for the benefit of all who are involved in the Society's activities.

Risk Assessment

This should be done for meeting venues and there is no reason why you should not ask the venue management for a copy of any risk assessment that they have done themselves to help you with yours. If you are arranging an outside visit eg to a railway depot, you will need to ask to make sure that they have carried out their own risk assessment for the visit or, if necessary, carry out your own.

It should be included in the Branch records that a risk assessment has been carried out, ideally as part of the Branch AGM report and/or minutes as this is a clear message that it has been done. The risk assessment should be reviewed every year and, once done, this too should be noted – in your committee minutes. In this way it becomes routine, although we should not be complacent and we should make sure that it is done properly. If you change venue a new risk assessment will be required; if you operate from more than one venue, then this needs to be done for each venue used. The first one that you complete is likely to be the hardest - it becomes easier with experience.

This is a request to all Branches to carry out a risk assessment for any venue that they use. As it is something that we should already be doing, please make sure that you have completed it by the Officers' Conference which will take place on the Sunday of this year's Members' Weekend in Portsmouth on Sunday 29 September 2024.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the Society

Please let me have a copy of your completed risk assessment as soon as possible. For subsequent years, please include it with your Branch AGM minutes and reports so that it becomes part of your regular Branch returns. If you are not sure or have any problems with this, please ask as there are enough experienced people within the RCTS who can help.

There is a sample risk assessment for a meeting venue that you can link into when you receive the covering email to access this newsletter. It has been done in this way as a word document to make it easier for you to download, adapt to local circumstances and complete. Please use it as required.

Additional things to help with Health & Safety Management

- 1 Emergency evacuation - Make sure that you give the necessary announcement at the start of each meeting about emergency evacuation including where the fire exits are and the assembly point to meet once you have left the building.
- 2 Ensure that committee members know their role in case of an emergency ie who does what, who checks which part of the building to make sure there is no-one left inside, who checks that everyone is accounted for at the assembly point.
- 3 Signing in sheets/books at meetings and other activities – make sure that everyone has signed in at the start and that any late-comers do so as soon as possible. Take the sheet/book with you when exiting in case of emergency, so that you can check that everyone is accounted for at the assembly point outside.

Branch Attendance Records

Please see 3 above under Additional things to help with Health & Safety Management. This is one of the very good reasons why we should use sign in sheets/books at meetings, and keep attendance records. The other reasons include being able to put together statistics on Branch meetings that can highlight what subjects are most popular, whether additional advertising results in higher attendance, the popularity of particular speakers and, in part, how Branches are doing amongst other things.

I would greatly appreciate it if all Branches would do as previously suggested ie submit their Branch attendance statistics as part of their post meeting routine. This makes it easier and quicker for you and does not then require you to look through the records every six months to compile the data and complete a form; you can send the information to me in an email using liaison@rcts.org.uk as long as the required information is included. For those of you who would like a reminder, the following information is requested:

- Branch Name
- Indoor meeting (which venue if you have more than one)
- Date
- Day of the Week
- Time (afternoon or evening)
- Subject *
- Attendees in person (members/guests/zoom)

*Subject subdivisions should be one of the following:

Steam/Transition/Diesel/Heritage/Museum/Modern/Technical/International/AGM/Members' Contributions

It is noted that many branches have a presentation after the business of the Branch AGM has been concluded so there would be two entries for that date.

An especial 'thank you' to the very few who are already sending me their Branch meeting attendance information after every meeting.

Branch and Society Officers must be members of the RCTS

All Society Officers should be members of the RCTS. This subject is linked to safety and security as officers can ask for access to the members only and officers only areas of the website that are not accessible to the general public. It is raised now, as I have been advised recently of someone who is not a member of the Society wishing to take up a Branch committee role. If you are in this position and the person concerned is worried about paying for membership, they could join and then be nominated for AVR – Active Volunteer Recognition – which means that they pay either nothing or a much smaller renewal amount. Alternatively, if the Branch does not wish to nominate for AVR for any reason, they could consider paying that individual's membership from Branch funds if the Branch can afford it and needs that individual's expertise, whichever Branch role they are looking to fill.

Any queries about this, please contact me and ask so that we can work out the best way forward for you.

Finally

All the items in this newsletter are important but should not be difficult to achieve if we work together for the good of everyone.

Thank you.

Irene