

Safety Guidelines for fieldwork

These are guidelines to assist you in conducting fieldwork safely in a coastal environment.

When out on your local shore, it is your responsibility to ensure the safety of yourself and those with you. Situations can change rapidly - rely on your instincts and knowledge of the area. Do not continue if you are concerned.

Key considerations

- Never work alone. Always take a buddy when surveying.
- Intertidal areas, including mudflats and sandflats, can potentially be very hazardous. ALWAYS check tide times and allow enough time to leave the intertidal area before high tide. Small creeks and streams can rapidly become impassable during the incoming tide so ensure your retreat route is accessible and safe.
- Let someone know where you are going and what time you expect to leave and return. Give them mobile phone numbers for you and your buddy. Make sure they know what to do if you do not contact them by a designated time. Inform them when you return home safely
- Your shore should be easily accessible, without steep climbs, water crossings or access through caves. Gain landowner permission before crossing any private land to access the shore
- Know the tide times for your shore. Tides can change quickly and unexpectedly, and can rapidly cause a dangerous situation. Timetables available at <https://www.tidetimes.org.uk>
- Aim to visit your shore during the falling tide, 1-2 hours before low water to avoid being caught by a rising tide. Do not work in places with a risk of being cut off from access routes by tides
- If conducting the survey along a cliff footpath or harbour, ensure you remain a safe distance from steep drops.
- Always wear walking boots or wellies with good grip when surveying, as you will be climbing over wet and slippery boulders and rockpools. Never conduct surveys barefoot, in flip-flops or sandals
- Take care walking across areas covered with seaweed, do not run or jump across boulders
- Check the local weather forecast. Avoid surveying in bad weather conditions, e.g. heavy rain, snow, high winds or storms
- If the weather worsens or you feel yourself becoming cold, leave the shore and return to a warm, safe place
- If driving, check road conditions and the weather forecast before travel. Do not drive in unsafe conditions such as high winds or snow. Check your car and carry an emergency car kit, particularly in winter
- Do not touch any animals that can cause harm such as jellyfish or anemones. Don't pick up any sharp objects. If in doubt use gloves

If unsure about anything, contact your CoCoast Office