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## 12.11 Public Hazards

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### INTRODUCTION

1. The primary function of all NCI Watchkeepers is to spot any vessel or person in difficulty or at risk, whether on land or at sea, and immediately report the essential facts to HMCG.
2. NCI's contribution to the national SAR community is in helping to maintain a safe coastal environment; however, there is a wide range of hazards that could pose a risk to the public, and which Watchkeepers may be asked to deal with. When dealing with these types of incident, Watchkeepers should have regard for their own safety and not put themselves at risk.





### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

3. The following information supports this particular document and its contents:

- ✓ Watchkeeping – Section 12.1
- ✓ Station Logbooks – Section 12.2
- ✓ Incident Reporting – Sections 12.3A and 12.3B
- ✓ Radio Skills – Sections 12.4A, 12.4B and 12.4C

### HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

4. Hazards may be sighted at sea (presenting a potential danger to navigation) or are to be found on the foreshore (such as evidence of pollution, chemical containers, munitions or other ordnance). NCI may have to deal with these hazards, not all of them immediately recognisable, for example:

|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| <b>suspect chemical container</b>                                                   | <b>different types of ordnance</b>                                                  |                                                                                      |                                                                                       |

5. Whatever is sighted, the safety of the public is a Watchkeeper's primary objective.
6. **What you must do:**
  - plot the object's position in relation to your Station (lat and long; OS ref; what3words)
  - note its description, using optical equipment and CCTV (where available), including colour, condition and any markings
  - telephone HMCG via 999 with the details and follow all instructions given
  - remain in the Station; further investigations and any necessary cordons will be undertaken by the Coastguard Rescue Teams or police

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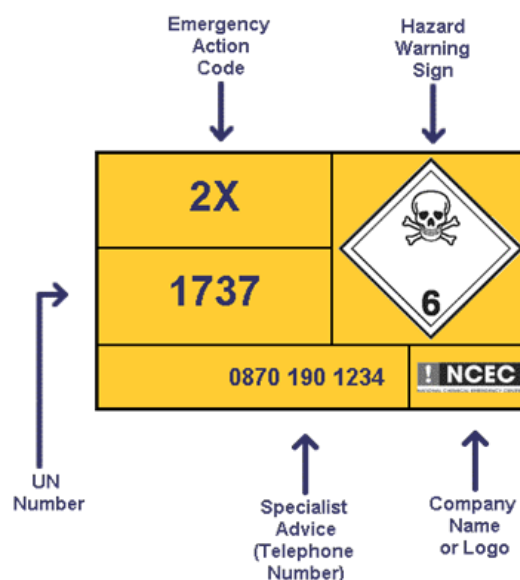


- be prepared to pass OS references of any beach access to deployed emergency service assets
- record the incident in the Station Logbook in red ink
- inform the Station Manager

7. Some containers may have yellow placards with black writing (known as Hazchem Codes). These signs display information indicating what type of hazard is inside so that emergency services know how to deal with the contents.

It is not necessary for Watchkeepers to understand what the codes mean, but it is imperative that any such information is recorded and passed on to HMCG at the earliest opportunity.

8. Not all containers found will contain chemicals, many are empty or contain only seawater. Other containers with rope/string/flags attached are likely to be breakaway improvised fishing dan buoys and may not need reporting. However, when in doubt, always report it.



### PYROTECHNICS / FLARES

9. Many vessels carry marine flares for use in an emergency. They have a limited life span and need to be renewed when they are time expired. Members of the public enquiring how to dispose of time expired pyrotechnics (TEPs) must be advised that from 31 December 2022, the current HM Coastguard flare disposal scheme will end. The new arrangements, supported by both British Marine and the RYA, provides a searchable online map, hosted on (<https://thegreenblue.org.uk/environmental-facilities-map>) showing links to businesses offering disposal services across the UK.

10. Under no circumstances must a Watchkeeper accept a TEP from a member of the public.



11. Where an unused flare is washed up on the beach, it should be treated as an unexploded ordnance.
12. HMCG are responsible for dealing with such items below the high-water mark, and the police are responsible for items above the high-water mark

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### WILDLIFE

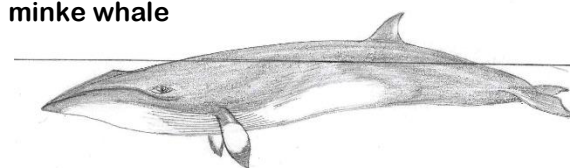
13. **Seals** will often leave the sea to rest on the beach; they will usually return to the water in their own time – seals can be dangerous and can bite.
14. Should an injured or apparently unwell seal be found on the beach, Watchkeepers must contact HMCG or the local contact for advice. They will need to know the:
  - exact location of the seal
  - nearest beach access
  - nature of the injury or illness if apparent
  - many NCI stations have local contacts such as seal sanctuaries which are willing to deal with sick or injured seals; it is not necessary to inform HMCG if this option is available
15. Stranded/injured/dead **whales, dolphins, porpoises (cetaceans)** must be reported to HMCG. There are certain procedures attendant to such marine mammals and HMCG is responsible for ensuring these are carried out.
16. Sightings of live cetaceans are activities and are not reported; reports of dead or stranded cetaceans are incidents and must be reported.
17. Harassment of cetaceans is an incident and must be reported to HMCG.



dolphins



porpoise



minke whale

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18. **Weever fish** – these fish have venomous spines along their dorsal fin (on the back of the fish), producing an initial sharp pain when stood on, which can develop into extreme pain, swelling and numbness. They live under the sand and mostly frequent the south and east coast.

Watchkeepers must not offer or administer first aid unless trained and competent First Aiders.

Watchkeepers may call an ambulance for the person affected, if requested to do so.

An Incident Report must be made in the Station Logbook.



19. **Jellyfish** – follow the same protocol as for Weever fish.

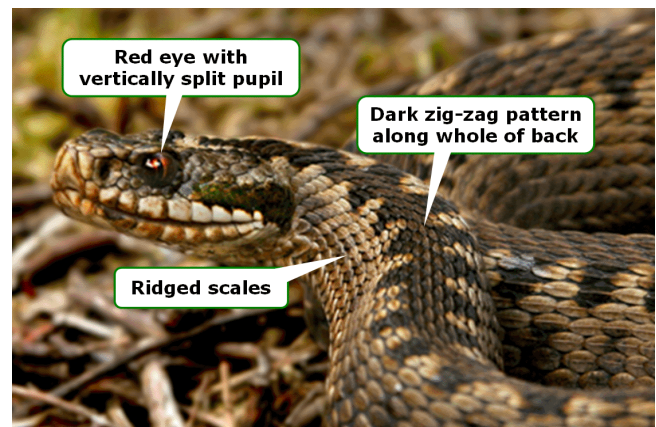
20. **Adders** – the UK's only venomous snake, is common in heathland and coastal areas. They are secretive creatures and will usually avoid contact with humans but will bite if they are surprised or feel threatened.

Generally, their poison is of little danger to humans, but an Adder bite can be painful, cause flu-like symptoms and, in rare cases, anaphylactic reactions.

Children and victims with underlying health risks are at a significantly greater risk.

Most Adder bites in the UK are on dogs.

Adders are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or interfere with the reptiles.



You should only offer first aid if you are competent to do so and call an ambulance if requested to do so.

### MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

21. NCI is not responsible for any first aid needs of the public at large – if an ambulance is needed you should call one immediately
22. You should only provide active first aid to members of the public if you feel competent to do so. You may offer, but not advise on, the use of the first aid kit as necessary.
23. Defibrillators, where available, may be used if it seems appropriate. There are clear instructions on how to attach the defibrillator pads and the machine then assesses the heart rhythm, only instructing you to deliver a shock if it is needed.