NetworkRail

Toolbox talk – Environment

Toolbox talk – Environment

Giant hogweed

What?

- introduced as an ornamental plant 150 years ago, Giant Hogweed is now wide spread throughout the UK
- it is a perennial plant that flowers only in its fourth year of growth and, having flowered, it dies
- □ throughout its life each plant can grow over 5 m tall and its flowers can disperse as many as 50 000 seeds allowing the species to spread rapidly and widely
- □ seeds can remain viable on or in the ground for up to 15 years
- □ it thrives in any habit, but particularly where soil has been disturbed such as river-banks, derelict land or railway embankments
- it is an invasive species and its control is dictated by legislation.

Identification

- □ the stem starts growing in March/April and is green, but develops dark red/purple spots or blotches during summer
- □ the stem is hollow, furrowed or ribbed, has sparse spiky hairs and can be 100 mm across
- □ leaves are dark green, have deeply cut lobes with ragged edges, can be 1 m across and form in a rosette
- □ flowers are white, umbrella like and up to 500 mm across and appear from June in the fourth year
- □ seed pods, which are beige, are produced from August to October. **Ouestions**

Why?

□ avoid environmental harm: as it spreads it endangers the survival of native plants. The loss of other vegetation may lead to excessive erosion of soil as the Giant Hogweed dies back in winter. Hogweed can cause significant harm to grazing animals

Do

- IMMEDIATELY stop all work near to the suspect plant and contact a line manager for instruction if it is thought Giant Hogweed has been identified
- inform a line manager if you notice damage to the fencing enclosing Giant Hogweed
- seek medical advice if in contact with the sap.



- avoid prosecution: it is illegal to plant or otherwise encourage the growth of Giant Hogweed. This could include moving surrounding soil that may contain either seeds or plant material unless as part of an eradication process
 - reduce health hazard: the plant contains large amounts of poisonous sap that, on contact with the skin and in the presence of sunlight, causes severe irritation, swelling and painful water blisters. This reaction can occur up to 24 hours after exposure to sunlight. Contact with eyes can cause temporary blindness.

- 1 Where is Giant Hogweed located on this site?
- 2 How are areas demarcated on the site?
- 3 How should Giant Hogweed be physically handled?
- 4 What should be done if Giant Hogweed has been found on the site?

Don't

- enter an identified area of Giant Hogweed during treatment
- × excavate or move soil that may contain seeds or other plant material without specific instruction
- double handle material suspected of containing Giant Hogweed, but if this is unavoidable do so on an impermeable surface
- stockpile material suspected to containing Giant Hogweed within 10 m of watercourses, gullies or drains
- track plant through Giant Hogweed it will cause it to spread.



Title:	
Given by:	D
Site:	

Name	Company	Signature

Developed from W045 Environmental Toolbox talks Date issued: November 2015

For further information please contact a member of the Environment Team

For further information please contact a member of the Environment Team



ate: