



Instruction manual – Public Snake Awareness and Venomous Snake Handling courses

The Team

All full-time staff and volunteers need to be dressed neatly in ASI-branded clothing, be it shirts or T-shirts. Every team member needs to have a name tag.

Setup

Staff must arrive at the venue at least one hour before the course commences but one and a half hour would be far better. Stock needs to be packed out and properly displayed at least half an hour before the course commences.

Unpacking equipment, especially snake tongs, once a course has started is disruptive and unprofessional.

Arrival of delegates

The attendance registers and name tags must be ready at the venue entrance with spare name tags and a marker pen. Please ensure that every arriving delegate is properly greeted, welcomed and asked to sign the attendance register prior to getting coffee or tea.

The greeting must be friendly and professional. Please refrain from turning delegate arrivals into a circus with silly jokes and too much humour. Always keep it professional.

The Course

Courses should start on the advertised time. Additional staff members and volunteers often tend to chat quietly at the back of the class, but this is disruptive for the presenter and should be avoided. Please go out of the venue for discussions.

The presenter must introduce himself/herself as well as all the additional staff members and volunteers. Explain the sequence of events for the day including tea breaks, the test and light lunch. Always point out where the toilets are.

PowerPoint Presentation

Make sure that the latest PowerPoint presentation is used, that it is updated and that the videos work with sound where needed.

Aim at completing the morning session by 12:30 so that delegates have about half an hour to complete their tests.

The Test

Make sure that the PowerPoint Presentation has the two test slides – the one showing the test and the second how to colour in the circles. Also remind delegates not to write on the question sheet and to sign the indemnity form.

Allow at least 45 minutes for lunch and aim at starting handling by 14:00. Delegates to meet in the lecture room and to receive their test marks.



Snake Handling

The handling area must be properly cordoned off with danger tape and our Danger – Snake Handling signs must be affixed to the danger tape. Additional ASI branding should also be displayed. Keep an eye on members of the public and remove them from the snake handling area if they enter it.

Snake Hook

After the group photograph delegates must stand in a halfmoon so that the lead trainer can explain the use of snake handling tools and containers, starting with a snake hook and a piece of rope. The hook is held at a 45-degree angle with the hook section sideways and slid under the middle section of the rope and then pointed up. The rope is gently lifted off the ground and placed gently into the bucket. If delegates are using two hands on the hook, they need to ensure they are on or close to the foam grip, and not halfway down the hook.

The Bucket

The lid of the bucket is placed on top of the bucket using the centre handle and avoiding placing fingers on the edges of the lid.

When a Puff Adder is on the move or uncooperative, it is best to place the hook about one third of the way from the head.

To release the snake from the bucket the lid is removed carefully using the centre handle while the bucket is upright. At no stage should the bucket be tilted sideways when removing the lid. Once the lid has been removed the bucket is tilted away from the delegate, gripped on the bottom sides of the bucket with both hands and the delegate walks backwards, sliding the snake out of the bucket. The bucket must not be lifted, and the snake not dropped out of it.

Delegates must be warned not to get too close to the snake with the snake hook pointing down to get the hook under the snake.

Snake Tube

When tubing, the tube must not face the sun and the lid must always be behind the tube. The front part of the snake must be in the air and cannot touch the ground. The head must be moved slowly towards the tube so that the snake sees the dark entrance and once the head goes into the tube, the snake must be released immediately. If it is slow to enter the tube, gently tap the tip of the tail and not the body. Once inside the tube the delegate needs to kneel behind the tube, get the lid ready using the handle, and lift the tube in the middle (not at the base or near the opening) to 45 degrees, give the tube a gentle tap on the ground and quickly get the lid on, sliding it from the chest onto the tube. When removing the lid to release the snake it must be a quick action as the snake may come flying out.



Snake Tongs

Use the JM 150 snake tong and a piece of rope to demonstrate its use. The rope must always be picked up in the centre with the rope in the front of the jaws against the upper lip. At no stage must the snake be picked up close to the head. If the snake bites the tongs or itself there is far too much pressure, and the snake is experiencing pain. If the snake is gripped near the neck, it may start reversing – this snake must be put down and reposition the grip. Remind delegates to always use two hands – one on the black rubber and the other on the grip and trigger.

The trigger is closed gently and never in a snapping motion. If the snake is on the move the delegate needs to start closer to the head. A snake moving away from a delegate can be picked up with the jaws of the tongs held sideways.

Ensure that both head and tail is placed in the bucket at the same time and that the tail must not get a grip on the edge of the bucket. The lid must be placed on the bucket quickly and delegates must be taught not to leave the tongs in the bucket while they get the lid ready.

As we do not teach tailing during the Level 1, try to refrain from tailing snakes during the course. Always be patient and gentle with delegates and praise them for good handling. Delegates do have name tags – mention their names when they are busy handling.

Things to avoid:

Avoid physical contact with delegates. No hands on shoulders or on their hands when showing them how to use the snake handling equipment.

When a delegate is using a snake hook or a snake tong on a snake, refrain from interfering with a snake tong or hook – having two people using snake handling equipment on a snake at the same time is not good and intimidates delegates.

Keep humour to a minimum. Remain professional.

Wrapping up

Get all delegates back into the lecture room and ensure that each delegate gets a certificate, snake poster and first aid booklet.

Remind them of permits if they want to do removals and additional courses.