

Health and Safety Guide 1

Guide for Members



EDITION 1

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1 Introduction

As part of its services to members, British Marine have for many years provided a health and safety manual which gave guidance on a very wide range of health and safety topics.

Over this time there has been a lot of new Health and Safety legislation, but also a growing body of 'good practice' both within the marine industry and outside, which has made compliance easier, as well as increasing recognition of the business case for good safety in terms of process efficiency, well-being of staff and profitability.

Over the years best practice has become established for many risk areas common to many industries. There is no intention in British Marine's Health and Safety service to repeat what has already been done perfectly well elsewhere (although useful references will be given), rather it will concentrate on areas of particular interest and challenge to the marine industry, and will endeavour to identify and disseminate areas of best practice.

In the interests of keeping the information fresh and up to date, the principal means of communicating these guides will be via the British Marine website.

The main aim of this *Guide for Members* is to set the scene and draw out some of the more important basic principles which underpin what sometimes seems like a daunting mass of legislation, rules and regulations that are frequently seen as a burdensome and bureaucratic obstacle to profitable trading:

- **Section 2. The Fundamentals of Health and Safety in the UK** briefly describes the basic elements of UK health and safety law and the core principles which it includes
- **Section 3. Safety Management** outlines the basics for setting up a health and safety system
- **Section 4. Health and Safety at your Workplace** things you have to do to meet basic legal requirements
- **Section 5. The Public** discusses the increasingly important topic of dealing with the public
- **Section 6. Contractors** discusses some aspects of working with contractors
- **Appendices** the appendices provide more information on :
 - Health and Safety regulators
 - Enforcement
 - Risk Assessment and Safe Systems of Work

A guide as brief as this can only give a basic overview of how health and safety works in the UK, the main principles common throughout the more detailed legislation and the agencies that members are likely to be dealing with. Hopefully it will help to dispel some of the fears and myths which this area of business life has attracted.

Most of what you need to do to meet what the law and the efficient running of your business demands, can be achieved through the application of informed common-sense. The aim of the British Marine Health and Safety Service is to assist you with this.

Important Note:

The *Guide for Members* provides an overview of statutory requirements and some guidance on how to comply. It is not an exhaustive guide and it is the responsibility of each employer to ensure that his particular business complies in the context of the services they provide and the circumstances of their operation.

Whilst great care has been taken in the preparation of this guide, British Marine and its advisers cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions, or for any consequences arising.

2 The Fundamentals of Health and Safety in the UK

This section describes the basic elements of health and safety law in the UK and introduces the fundamental principles therein.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 over-arches all of the regulations, guidance and codes that have been published since it first appeared. When confronted with a seemingly daunting mass of health and safety legislation it is often useful to recall that at its heart in the 1974 Act lies the simple principle that ***employers have the duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees***. This duty also extends to members of the public who may be affected by work activity (this is of major significance to the marine industry and is discussed further in section 5).

The term “reasonably practicable” occurs throughout health and safety legislation and means that when considering measures to reduce risk to health and safety a balance has to be struck between the benefit in reducing risk and the cost. In other words, for a risk which is very high it would quite justifiable to spend a lot of money and effort in reducing it, whereas a small risk may be small enough not to justify any expenditure at all. There is a level of risk which is low enough to be considered “broadly acceptable” and requires no further effort to reduce or eliminate it.

2.1 Regulations, Codes and Guidance

Beneath the fundamentally simple principles of the Health and Safety at Work Act, sit a raft of regulations which apply these principles to specific types of hazard such as falls from height, hazardous chemicals, work equipment and operating visual display units. One of these regulations concerns the important topic of ***risk assessment*** which will be returned to later in Appendix 3. The regulations, together with the Act, are legal documents which set down the ***criminal law*** in respect of health and safety.

The Health and Safety Executive publish ***Approved Codes of Practice***, referred to as ACOPs. These are written and presented to a high standard and serve two important functions. Firstly, they clarify and expand upon the meaning of the dry and legal writing style of the regulations; secondly, they go on to give guidance as to how the requirements of the regulations can be met. Importantly, if you can show to an inspector or a court that you have complied with ACOP guidance, or used an equally effective alternative, that is *usually* taken as showing compliance with the regulations.

HSE ***Guidance*** documents do not have the status of an ACOP, but again, they are well written and presented. They describe good practice and compliance with them will usually be taken as compliance with the law.

An inherent limitation of HSE ACOPs and Guidance documents, is that they have to be written to cover the application of the subject material across the whole range of industry and business and therefore cannot take into account the issues, constraints and difficulties in any particular industry.

2.2 Managing Health and Safety at Work

There is one set of regulations, often known as the “Management Regs”, which stand apart from the others and their ACOPs, in that it is wide-ranging and covers many of the fundamental management of safety issues which are common across the whole range of specific risks covered by the other regulations. These are the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations¹. The principal issues they address are briefly summarised below:

(a) Risk Assessment

The process of risk assessment is at the heart of modern safety management and is the means by which an organisation:

- identifies what could happen or go wrong to cause harm to people, either at work, visiting the premises or nearby
- judges how likely these things are to happen and the consequences
- decides the measures required, if any, to make these risks acceptable

The assessments must be regularly reviewed so they keep pace with changes in the workplace and improvements in ways of controlling risk. Further information on risk assessment is given in Appendix 3.

(b) Principles of Prevention

In deciding which means of risk control are appropriate there is a clear order of preference:

- **avoid or eliminate** the source of the risk (prevention)
- **reduce the risk** (for example, by making its occurrence less likely or its outcome less severe)
- **provide protection** (for example, hearing defenders or lifejackets)

(c) Arrangements for Managing Health and Safety

Employers must have in place arrangements for:

- Planning
- Organisation
- Control
- Monitoring

¹ <http://www.hseni.gov.uk/hsg65.pdf>

- Review

These are basic business management principles, essentially a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle that can be applied to most other business areas. Similarly, there are benefits in integrating health and safety management into other business processes, for example maintenance management and environmental management. These health and safety managements arrangements are also commonly known as **Safety Management Systems** and are further discussed in Section 3.

(d) Health Surveillance

Where employees may be exposed to chemicals or agents that could damage their health, a suitable programme of surveillance is required², which at minimum, will be the keeping of health records.

(e) Health and Safety Advice

Companies must have available to them competent health and safety advice appropriate to the levels of risk and the activities within the business. This could be from staff within the company, external companies, or a combination of the two³.

(f) Emergency Preparedness

Where the company uses processes that could result in serious danger in a part or the whole of their premises, or even outside the premises, the safety management arrangements will need to deal with preparations for foreseeable emergencies. This will include things such as boat fires and the release of hazardous chemicals.

(g) Information for employees

All persons working for the company, including part-time, self-employed and contract staff, need to be provided with comprehensible and relevant information on the risks they face and how they are to be controlled.

(h) Competence and Training

Employees must receive the training necessary for them to safely carry out their work. This will need to be refreshed periodically and supplemented as necessary when methods of work change.

² www.hse.gov.uk/health-surveillance/index.htm

³ [Getting Specialist Help with Health and Safety. HSE: INDG420.](#)

3 Safety Management

Investigations into major accidents over the last twenty or so years have usually made the link between a major safety failing and a problem with management systems. This has led to the increasing adoption of the term 'Safety Management' which firmly links the attainment of good safety performance with good management systems and practice. Should a serious accident occur and an inspector decides to carry out an investigation, it can be said with confidence that his efforts will not be limited to identifying the immediate cause (e.g. failure of a machine, or a badly trained staff member) but will go on to identify the systematic management causes (which in the cases just given could be poor maintenance systems and poor training planning).

Studies have also shown that top-class profitable companies usually have top-class safety management. This is essentially the argument that *good safety is good business*.

The recognition that good management is a pre-requisite to good safety performance has led to the production of various codes and standards for safety management systems.

Two which are particularly well recognised in the UK are referenced below⁴. Both these follow the basic Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle of continuous improvement.

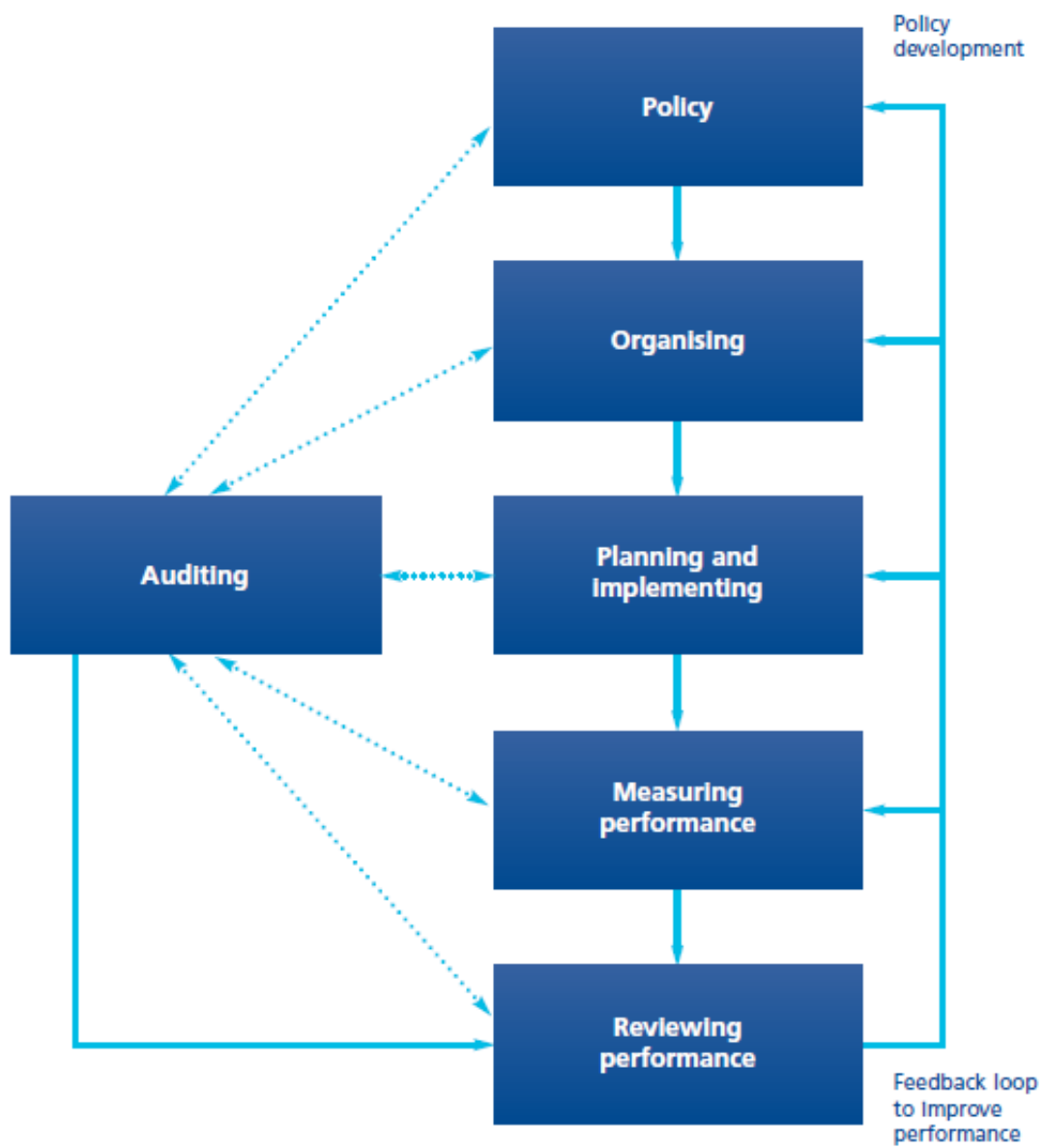
Reference 4 expands in some depth what is meant by the boxes in the flow diagram on the following page, summarised more briefly as:

Policy: The statement of the employer's intentions, approach and objectives. They recognise the importance to business of having a good safety culture where risks are identified and controlled systematically, the workforce is fully involved and trained adequately. (Note: A health and safety policy is one of the basic legal requirements on an employer. See Section 4)

Organising: How the company:

- Maintains management control
- Promotes co-operation
- Communicates information
- Ensures employees are competent

⁴ [Managing for Health and Safety. HSE:HSG 65](#). See also [Plan, Do, Check, Act - An introduction to managing for health and safety HSE:INDG275](#)
BS 18004:2008 Guide to achieving effective occupational health and safety performance.



Planning and Implementation: The way in which the company plans and programmes what it needs to do to control the risks within its workplace.

Measuring Performance: How the company measures its progress, both through reactive measures such as accident and ill-health rates, and through active measures such as achieving training plans and carrying out inspections.

Auditing and Reviewing Performance: The process of standing back and taking a view, perhaps with external help, of how well the company's arrangements are working in the achievement of its policy aims and what could be done better.

The above serves to show that the management processes for health and safety are very similar to those for other areas of business activity.

4 Health and Safety at your Workplace - Things you have to do

Most modern health and safety law is termed 'goal-setting' because it sets general objectives but does not lay down in detail what has to be done. There are however some basic things which are prescribed in law and must be complied with.

Shown below is a list of these basics. They are by no means all that the law requires but they provide the foundation for setting up safety management arrangements which suit your business and the things that you do. The footnotes provide further information from the HSE.

- Have a **Safety Policy** if you employ 5 or more people⁵
- Do **Risk Assessments** of your work activities and write them down if you employ five or more people⁶.
- Take out **Employers Liability Insurance**⁷ and display the certificate.
- Make sure staff are **Properly Trained**
- Have **Competent Advice**⁸ available. This can be a suitably experienced member of staff, or a consultant.
- Provide **First Aid**⁹
- Provide basic **Health and Safety Facilities**¹⁰ (toilets, washing and drinking facilities)
- **Consult with staff** on health and safety matters¹¹
- Display the **Health and Safety Poster** (or supply a leaflet)
- **Register**⁵ with HSE or Local Authority (see appendix)
- **Report Accidents**¹² and certain other occurrences.

How you approach the specific risk areas in your business (such as working at height, hazardous chemicals, asbestos etc) is discussed in the relevant HSE guides. General information on a range of workplace hazards and related topics is provided in the HSE Toolbox¹³.

⁵ [Managing for Health and Safety – HSG65](#)

⁶ Appendix 3 of this Guidance

⁷ [HSE 40. Employers Liability \(Compulsory Insurance\) Act 1969.](#)

⁸ [Guidance for Employers on when and how to get Advice on Health and Safety. Getting Specialist Help with Health and Safety HSE:INDG420.](#)

⁹ [First Aid at work HSE: L74](#)

¹⁰ [Workplace Health, Safety, and Welfare – A Short Guide for Managers. HSE:INDG244](#)

¹¹ [Consulting Employees on Health and Safety: A Guide to the Law. HSE:INDG232.](#)

¹² [Reporting Accidents and Incidents at Work \(RIDDOR\) HSE: INDG453](#)

¹³ [The Health and Safety Toolbox HSE: HSG268](#)

5 The Public

There cannot be many members of British Marine who do not have at least indirect contact with the public as part of their work activities. Contact with the public was included within the scope of the health and safety at work act to cover situations where the public may be affected by a work activity¹⁴, for example, tools dropped by an employee from a boat stored in a public access area, or collisions with work vehicles. There are some important distinctions which make dealing with the public quite different. These include:

- Although within the remit of health and safety law there is relatively little guidance issued by the HSE pertaining to public safety issues. A benefit of this is that where industry produces its own guidance, it can become quite authoritative.
- For the HSE to get involved in an accident to a member of the public they need to be clear that it was connected with a work activity and that the work was part of the ‘undertaking’ of the employer. Generally, unless there is a fatality, or the risk appears very high or could affect a large number of people, or is in response to a complaint from a member of the public, they do not get involved.
- Under the Occupiers Liability Act¹⁵, occupiers of premises can be liable for accidents to visitors to the premises whether lawful or not. In the sense of the marine industry, ‘occupier’ could be a marina or dry dock owner and ‘premises’ can be taken to include outdoor areas and water spaces.
- A key area of risk control available when managing occupational risks is the ability to be able to train and instruct employees. This is not available when managing public risks but brings with it a tendency for other stakeholders such as sports governing bodies and groups representing particular specialist groups to become involved.

Where some regulators and safety ‘officers’ have applied themselves in recent years to public safety issues, there has sometimes been a tendency to seek solutions which minimise or eliminate risk altogether, often destroying the very features and characteristics that attracted the visitor in the first place. This has also been made worse by fear, real or imagined, of large civil compensation claims. This has manifested itself in much adverse press coverage directed at health and safety bodies and

¹⁴ [Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974](#)

¹⁵ [Occupiers Liability Act 1984](#):

professionals in recent years. More positive developments to these trends have been the emergence of safety principles¹⁶ for public safety which recognise:

- Members of the public have responsibilities for their own safety
- The acceptance of risk by the public should be on the basis of informed choice (voluntary acceptance of risk)
- Risk cannot be completely eliminated (and indeed it is sometimes harmful overall if such things are attempted)

¹⁶ [Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group \(VSCG\) Guiding Principles](#)
[National Water Safety Forum, Water Safety Principles](#)

6 Contractors

Contracting plays a major part in the work of the marine industry, with British Marine members finding themselves in the roles of client or contractor or both. The fundamental principle with regard to health and safety is that the legal requirements on an employer are defined by criminal law and therefore cannot be passed on to others by a contract. Contracting is therefore an integral activity in the client's safety management system.

When contracting work the client has responsibilities to:

- Select a suitable contractor
- Provide appropriate levels of management and supervision
- Decide on the information and training which the contractor needs
- Communicate and work in co-operation with the contractor

These points are discussed further below. They are all intended to establish co-operation and communication between client and contractor working within the client's system for managing safety.

Note that some regulations make specific requirements in respect of contract work¹⁷.

Selecting a Contractor.

The client has a duty to select a contractor who they believe is competent to carry out the intended work. This could be indicated through:

- Previous relevant experience
- Membership of trade bodies
- Independent assessments of the contractor
- Policies for sub-contracting
- Recognised qualifications or skills
- Good health and safety record

Where appropriate, these may be supported by referees. Note that where the proposed work falls within the area of expertise of the client, there is a greater expectation that a competent contractor will be selected.

Managing and Supervising the Contractor

The client always has a duty to monitor the contractor's work. The extent of this will depend on:

¹⁷ For example, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations, Control of Lead Regulations, Asbestos Regulations

- Level of risk
- Expertise of the client

Where the client is expert in the area of work, a greater degree of monitoring will be expected. This could extend to direct supervision of the contractor where their experience and competence is substantially below that of the client's.

Information and Training

Whatever their respective levels of expertise and competence, there will be information known to the client which will be essential for the contractor to know in order to carry out the work safely. This includes:

- Presence of hazardous materials, e.g. asbestos
- Fragile roof coverings
- Client's permit-to-work, confined spaces and other access restriction requirements
- Site evacuation and other emergency procedures.

Working with the Contractor

In most cases the contractor will be working within the client's safety management system, especially where the worksite is shared. The contractor must know clearly what is expected of him and the limits on the sharing of a worksite, the in-house rules, and reporting in/out arrangements. Co-operation and communication is essential, which must extend to the sharing of risk assessments.

The client must not forget to make his own staff aware that contractors will be on the premises.

For more hazardous activities, the client may require the contractor to work to a formal permit-to-work system.

Appendix 1: The Regulators

Health and Safety Regulators

This section gives brief details of the main regulatory bodies you may come across in the marine industry. Appendix 2 gives more information about how they carry out their enforcement activities.

A 1.1 Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

The HSE are an agency reporting to the Department for Work and Pensions. They are the principal enforcement agency for health and safety law in England, Scotland and Wales. They currently have a staff of around 3500 of whom approximately 1300 are inspectors dealing with the full range of workplace activities from nuclear power stations to garages and boat repair workshops. Inspectors share their enforcement activities with local authorities' environmental health inspectors (see below). The division of work is set down in a HSE/Local Authority Circular¹⁸ with, generally speaking, the LA inspectors concentrating on lower risk activities such as shops and offices. Activities or locations in the marine industry where you may come across HSE inspectors are:

- Docks (including unloading work aboard)
- Passengers when on shore
- Boat building/repairing
- Dry docks
- Construction work
- Commercial diving

The Health and Safety at Work Act and therefore the powers of inspectors, extend across the whole of the landmass of England, Scotland and Wales down to the coastal low water mark. HSE Inspectors have powers under the Health and Safety at Work Act to enter and inspect workplaces (anywhere where work is carried out) to inspect health and safety conditions and investigate accidents. This can include onboard ships whilst they are not navigating. In practice the HSE will usually pass over the investigation of an inland marine incident or issue to either the MAIB or the MCA. There is a tri-partite memorandum of understanding¹⁹ which is reviewed from time-to-time.

See also the section on the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

A 1.2 Local Authorities

Areas in the marine industry where you may come across local authority inspectors include:

¹⁸ [Local Authority division of work.](#)

¹⁹ www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/howwework/framework/mou/mcamou.pdf

- Marinas (where major activity is boat storage and retail)
- Hire boat bases
- Exhibitions
- Offices
- Catering facilities
- Recreational activity

Generally, Local Authority inspectors have similar powers to HSE inspectors.

A 1.3 Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

The MCA is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). It derives its powers and responsibilities principally from the Coastguard Act 1925, the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and the Maritime Security Act 1997.

MCA Inspectors have powers under the 1995 Act to enter any premises in the UK or board any UK ship anywhere in the world and any other ship present in UK waters for the purposes of making such examination or inspection as the inspector considers necessary.

Note that the Merchant Shipping Act also applies to ships (defined as “any description of vessel used in navigation”) wherever they operate, including inland waters²⁰

The MCA has enforcement responsibility in respect of:

- Ships
- Ships’ work and lifting equipment
- Crew
- Cargo stowage (in relation to safety of the ship)

Their principal interests are in the seaworthiness of vessels and the safety and competence of crews. They are progressively transposing legislation made under the Health and Safety at Work Act into merchant shipping law.

A 1.4 Marine Accident Investigation Branch

It is a common misconception that the MAIB are a part of the MCA. In fact they are a completely separate branch within the Department for Transport. They have responsibility for investigating reported²¹ marine accidents to determine their circumstances and causes, and derive their legal powers from the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, Part XI

²⁰ [Merchant Shipping Notice MSN 1837](#) - Categorisation of Waters

²¹ MAIB have powers to investigate any accident involving a “ship”. Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting & Investigation) Regulations.

Although they have no powers to enforce or prosecute, the recommendations in their reports carry considerable authority and could be used as the basis for enforcement action by the other agencies (MCA, HSE, etc).

A 1.5 Fire and Rescue Authorities

The local Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for enforcing the fire safety arrangements²². They have the powers to issue alterations, improvement, and prohibition notices.

A 1.6 Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA)

Since April 2007, the HSE took over responsibility for AALA. The day-to-day activities of the authority have been contracted to the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS) who deal with licence applications, inspections, issue/refusal of licences, and providing advice.

AALS inspectors have similar powers of access, investigation and enforcement to HSE inspectors.

Compliance with the requirements of Adventure Activities Licensing regulations does not absolve employers from compliance with the Merchant Shipping and Health and Safety at Work Acts.

A 1.7 Lead Authorities

There are a number of areas in the marine industry where the areas of responsibilities of the regulators may overlap, for example.

- Docks and harbours
- Coastal and inland waterways
- Ship building and ship repair
- Construction work
- Hovercraft

Where this occurs, the regulators will nominate a lead authority to take the issue forward. The MCA will be the lead authority for inspection of vessels used in navigation and their crews, with the MAIB having the corresponding duty for investigating accidents. The HSE will be the lead authority for enforcement and investigation of occupational accidents involving shore-based staff, including accidents to workers on the vessel, resulting from land-based works or undertakings, such as quay side work.

²² Arrangements were introduced under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Appendix 2: Enforcement

As stated in Appendix 1, MAIB does not have enforcement responsibilities. The HSE and Local Authorities have enforcement powers under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and the MCA under the Merchant Shipping Act. These are outlined below.

A 2.1 Health and Safety at Work Act

An **Improvement Notice** may be issued if an inspector considers there has been a breach of statutory requirements, or that a previous breach is likely to be repeated. The notice will give the inspector's reasons and a time limit for making the improvement.

Where the inspector considers there is a risk of serious personal injury, a **Prohibition Notice** may be issued. This prevents continuation of the activity causing the breach until the causes have been remedied. Again the notice will give the inspector's reasons.

Both types of notice may give indications of the measures required to remedy the deficiencies.

Appeals against Improvement or Prohibition Notices

A person on whom a notice has been served may appeal to an industrial tribunal who uphold, amend, or cancel the notice. Lodging an appeal has the effect of suspending the notice, but in the case of a prohibition notice, only if the tribunal so directs.

Prosecutions

Depending on the severity of the offence and level of court in which it is heard, penalties can include unlimited fines and prison terms.

A 2.2 Merchant Shipping Act

MCA Inspectors have similar powers within the areas of application of the Act to HSE and local authority inspectors under HSW. They can issue Improvement and Prohibition Notices similar to those under HSW, although appeals are made to an arbitrator.

Further information can be found in the HSE/MCA/MAIB Memorandum of Understanding²³

²³ www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/howwework/framework/mou/mcamou.pdf

Appendix 3: Risk Assessment

A 3.1 Introduction

Section 2.2 discussed the importance of risk assessment to modern safety management, especially in empowering the employer to determine the most appropriate risk controls for their own circumstances. This appendix briefly explains the basically simple process of doing a risk assessment; who should do it and some common pitfalls and misconceptions. When done in an appropriate way, a risk assessment provides an excellent process for making balanced and informed judgements as to whether a risk is acceptable as is, or requires reduction measures. They also provide a crucial input to the development of 'safe systems of work' which set down in more detail how a job is to be done and the precautions to be taken.

A 3.2 Basics of Risk Assessment

The HSE have published a free) guide to risk assessment²⁴. It identifies the five steps to risk assessment:

- Identify the hazard
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Record your findings and implement them
- Review your assessment and update if necessary

This simple staged approach can be applied to any type of risk from the simplest to the most complex. The depth to which this is done will vary according to the magnitude of the hazards and risks involved. An assessment of a chemical plant or nuclear power station will be a very complex affair, however for the great majority of workplaces and activities in the marine industry, the risk assessment will be a demonstration that knowledgeable and experienced people have identified the hazards in their workplace and made a reasoned and informed judgement of what is necessary to control them, taking account of industry guidance and best practice, and published codes of practice.

The health and safety law for risk assessment require them to be 'suitable and sufficient'. The types of hazard to be considered need not go beyond those which are reasonably foreseeable, but in a marine context, would include bad weather.

²⁴ [Risk Assessment. HSE:INDG163.](#)

A 3.3 Who does the assessment?

It is important that assessments involve all the people who have experience and knowledge of the hazards and risks in the workplace and the ways in which they could be eliminated or reduced. This will include representatives of the employees. Professional safety advisers can help if the in-house staff feel unsure how to go about it, but there can be no substitute for first-hand knowledge of the processes and activities in the workplace.

A 3.4 The Method to Use?

There are a number of ways in which to carry out assessments depending on the complexity of the risks within the workplace and the familiarity of staff with any particular method. Whatever method is chosen, it is vital that it recognises the basic principles set out by the HSE. Risk assessment requires the application of knowledge and judgement by experienced people and no method can substitute for these.

In choosing a method the general principle is to keep it as simple as possible. There is nothing to be gained from adopting methods which are unfamiliar or more complicated than necessary. Be particularly cautious of methods which attempt to remove the need for exercising judgement.

In common use are methods which use numbers typically in the range 1 to 5 to describe the potential severity of a hazard and the likelihood of it happening and then multiply the two together to obtain a risk 'value' (minimum of 0, maximum 25). These methods may be useful when the hazards and risks are of similar magnitude but progressively more care is required in their use and interpretation when a workplace has larger ranges of hazards and risks.

Illustrating risks on a matrix with axes of severity and likelihood of harm²⁵ avoids the issues associated with the use of simple numbers and can give more weight to those risks which could give rise to very serious outcomes, but are probably unnecessarily complex for general use for the great majority of hazards found within the marine industry.

On balance, the straightforward tabular format of assessment as advocated by the HSE should provide an appropriate balance between ease of application and providing 'suitable and sufficient' assessments in the hands of experienced and competent assessors. The process can be easily adapted to suit individual companies.

Finally, always keep the assessment as brief and succinct as possible. It is important that its results are readily apparent and understandable and not buried within large volumes of paper.

²⁵ A good example can be found in BS 18004:2008 – Guide to Achieving Effective Occupational Health and Safety Performance.

A 3.5 Deciding on Risk Control Measures.

Risk assessments do not usually reveal many risks that are so small they can be neglected, nor so large that the activity must be immediately banned or discontinued. This puts the risk in the zone defined by the HSE²⁶ as 'tolerable' and where the risk must be reduced 'as far as is reasonably practicable'. In judging what is reasonably practicable, the assessor needs to consult the relevant 'Approved Codes of Practice' issued by the HSE (see Section 2), and guidance, advice, and best practice put out by industry bodies (such as British Marine).

A 3.6 Documentation, Review and Revision

Assessments for anything other than trivial risks need to be recorded and made freely available to those in the workplace. It is essential that risk assessments are not allowed to become out-of-date and become little more than bookcase filling. A regular programme of updates and revision is required to ensure that the risk assessments properly reflect what actually happens at the workplace.

²⁶ [Reducing Risks, Protecting People – HSE's Decision-making Process.](#)

Other Guides Available:

