



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

# Health & Safety Policy

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## Foreword

Health and safety at work is a very important matter for us all and must be treated as such by all managers and staff.

We all have a legal and moral obligation to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all our employees and anyone else who may be affected by our operations.

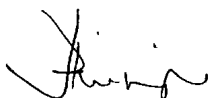
The NIO Board is committed to ensuring that we promote a positive Health and Safety culture and that the Department complies with the relevant legislative requirements.

Managers at all levels are responsible for the health and safety of their staff whilst they are on official duties whether that takes place on or off the premises and whether within or outside normal working hours.

Everyone of us has a responsibility to take reasonable care for our own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do, or fail to do.

The discharge of these responsibilities and the development of a safety conscious culture within the NIO are objectives that require the commitment of all staff.

This document sets out the Policy and guidance that all managers and staff should follow.



Jonathan Phillips  
Permanent Secretary NIO

## **Statement of General Policy**

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) affirms its commitment to comply with the legal requirements of the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and such other relevant statutory provisions as apply within Northern Ireland together with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and such other relevant statutory provisions as apply within Great Britain. The NIO is committed to ensuring in so far as is reasonably practicable the:

- health, safety and welfare of its employees and of others who may be affected by the operations of the NIO,
- maintenance of safe and healthy working conditions,
- provision and maintenance of safe plant and equipment,
- prevention of accidents and cases of work related ill health,
- control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities,
- provision of information, instruction and supervision,
- competence of employees to do their tasks through adequate training, information and instruction,
- safe use and handling of substances,
- consultation with employees on matters affecting their health and safety and
- revision of this policy every three years or as necessary

Compliance with health and safety procedures is to be regarded as an integral part of the duties of **all** staff.

## **Organisation and Responsibilities**

This policy covers the NIO and its agencies. Because of the wide variety of activities undertaken by the Department particular arrangements may operate in different locations and the policy may be adjusted to suit the local circumstances.

The general organisation and arrangements for NIO core are set out below. These describe the generic roles and responsibilities of all staff to ensure that health and safety responsibilities are fulfilled.

### ***Permanent Secretary***

The Permanent Secretary has primary responsibility for the compliance with health and safety at work legislation in the NIO.

### ***Directors & Chief Executives***

Each Director is responsible for implementing the general policy and monitoring compliance with the Department's Health and Safety Policy within their areas of responsibility. The Directors of the Prison Service, Public Prosecution Service, The Crown Solicitor and the Chief Executives of Forensic Science Northern Ireland, Compensation Agency and the Youth Justice Agency are responsible for their respective areas for health and safety. Directors and Chief Executives are directly accountable to the Permanent Secretary who retains overall authority.

### ***Head of Division***

Heads of Divisions/Branches, Law Offices, Governing Governors and Principal of the Prison Service College have a responsibility to ensure compliance with all the requirements of the health and safety at work policies in their particular areas of responsibility and are accountable to their Director or Chief Executive.

The Head of Division/Unit must appoint a Local Safety Officer (LSO) who must be of at least Grade C. The selection of an LSO must be made in consultation with the local management team. The LSO must assess the business activities of their Division/Branch for health and safety risks and ensure that appropriate risk assessments are conducted. Groups of divisions may develop joint working arrangements so long as they clearly define the LSO for their organisation.

Knowledge, experience and aptitude towards health and safety risk management must be given due consideration when selecting a suitable candidate for the post of LSO. Typically a suitable candidate should command the respect of management and staff, be capable of communicating with senior staff and conveying difficult messages.

### ***Managers***

The Northern Ireland Office wants to maintain its reputation as an attractive employer, which meets its responsibilities for protecting the health and safety of its staff. The intention is to go beyond simple compliance with health and safety legislation and move towards a situation where health and safety considerations are firmly embedded in the planning and decision-making processes and the 'culture' of a manager's area of responsibility. This policy and associated arrangements define the standards for the way managers and staff should behave towards each other and towards our customers and stakeholders. It is an important part of the role of every line manager to ensure that the culture in the part of the organisation for which they have responsibility upholds these principles and complies with them.

Managers at all levels are responsible for maintaining safe working practices and ensuring the effective implementation of health and safety measures within their respective branches and business activities. The Department can instigate disciplinary proceedings against any person who shows wilful disregard of safe working practices.

Within this function line managers have the following responsibilities:

- to identify their personal responsibilities under the department's health and safety policy and take responsibility for their own health and safety and that of their staff and colleagues.

- to ensure that the department's health and safety policy is clearly communicated to all members of their team and to relevant colleagues.
- to ensure that induction of new staff and those transferring from other areas of the department includes information on health and safety matters.
- to ensure that they and their staff take part when necessary in departmental training events on health and safety matters.
- to ensure that the health and safety policy is put into practice in their area of responsibility and is subject to review as circumstances change and at regular intervals, and the findings passed to the appropriate sources for consideration.
- to ensure regular consultation with their team on health and safety issues, including providing opportunities at team meetings/briefing for team members to raise and discuss any health and safety issues or concerns.
- to seek and make appropriate use of specialist expertise available within the department on health and safety issues.
- to ensure that a system is in place for identifying hazards and assessing risks in their area of responsibility and that prompt and effective action is taken to eliminate or control identified risks or hazards.
- to ensure that arrangements are in place for effective monitoring, measuring and reporting of health and safety performance in their area of responsibility – including arrangements for reporting all accidents.
- to work with their team to show continuous improvement in relation to health and safety performance in their area of responsibility.
- to make health and safety a priority area in terms of informing business planning and decision-making in their area of responsibility.
- to demonstrate that their own behaviour, words and actions reinforce the messages in the department's health and safety policy.

- to ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated to deal with health and safety issues in their area of responsibility.
- to develop a culture within their area of responsibility which puts 'health and safety' first.

### **Staff**

Staff at all levels are required to exercise reasonable care for themselves, their colleagues and other persons who may be affected by their actions or their omissions whilst at work. All staff must also:

- Co-operate with the Department in the implementation of health and safety measures.
- Use equipment and other work items which are provided, in accordance with the instructions and training given, and must not intentionally misuse or interfere with anything provided in the interests of health and safety.
- Report all incidents, accidents and near misses (no matter how trivial), faulty equipment or dangerous practices to their immediate supervisor.
- Be alert to changing risk and seek advice from managers in such situations.

Exhibiting a wilful disregard for safe working practices can result in the instigation of disciplinary proceedings against an officer.

### **Arms Length Bodies**

Arms length bodies that are sponsored by the Department are expected to comply with health and safety legislation in whatever jurisdiction they operate- including the development of appropriate policies, the appointment of competent persons to manage and control risk and ensure the appropriate training of staff. Sponsoring divisions should ensure that such bodies develop

the necessary arrangements to enable them to provide assurance on compliance.

### ***Trade Union Side***

Under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 and Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations (NI) 1979 Trade Union Side may appoint safety representatives. NIPSA have agreed to represent all staff regarding health and safety issues. Union safety representatives must be consulted on health and safety matters, and may investigate and make appropriate representations on hazards, dangerous occurrences and accidents in the workplace, raise issues relating to general health and safety matters and attend safety committee meetings.