

ODPM Annual Health and Safety Report 2003 to 2004

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Contents

[History](#)

[Performance](#)

[Targets](#)

[Annex 1](#)

[Annex 2](#)

History.

1. Until 31 March 2003, the ODPM Health and Safety requirements were managed by the Department for Transport (DfT) Occupational Health and Safety Unit (OHSU) based in the Ashdown House, Hastings. This was a legacy from the Machinery of Government changes that split the former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions into ODPM and DfT

2. Apart from a few training courses (H&S Co-ordinator and Accident Investigation) all OHSU support on health and safety matters ceased on 31st March 2003. At this point H&S provision became the direct responsibility of ODPM. Some support on Occupational Health and Equality and Disability matters continued to be provided by the DfT OHSU until early 2004.

3. This 2003/2004 Annual Report includes information on the whole of ODPM HQ and its Agencies, including The Rent Service, which was an ODPM Agency until 1st April 2004.

4. Significant risks faced by employees and the strategies in place to control the risks.

4.1 **ODPM's HQ staff** in London, Hastings, Glossop and Hemel Hempstead are mainly office based and regarded as being at low risk. Generic and specific risk assessments exist for these staff. A Staff Counselling and Support Service is available to all ODPM staff..

4.2 **Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) and Government Offices.** Although the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has overall responsibility for the buildings occupied by Government Offices, they carry out functions on behalf of 10 Departments. The RCU and Government Office Network Health and Safety Committee produce their own Occupational Health and Safety Annual Report. Copies can be obtained from the RCU. However, the accident and sickness absence figures for the RCU have been included in this report to give a full picture of the whole of ODPM.

4.3 **Planning Inspectorate** staff include both office-based personnel and Inspectors who are home based and whose work involves them travelling either to carry out inspections or hold enquiries. Guidance and risk assessments have been provided on lone working, driving long distances and working with the public. There are two separate Health and Safety committees one covering Inspectors and the other covering office based staff in Temple Quay House (including minor occupiers). This falls within the umbrella of the local Whitley Committee structure.

Office based Planning Inspectorate staff in Cardiff are covered by the National Assembly of Wales Health and Safety procedures.

During the year Planning Inspectorate have:

- Made available interactive sessions from the Suzy Lampleugh Trust on lone working at the Inspectors' training week at Warwick University.
- Made available a lone worker protection system to Inspectors who are predominantly required to visit very remote locations.

- Provided Lifestyle Screening for both office-based staff and inspectors during the period of this report.

4.4 The Rent Service's work is mainly centred on the private rented housing sector in England. It carries out rental valuations for housing benefit purposes, makes fair rent determinations, advises local authorities about the effects on rent of housing renovation grant applications by landlords and also carries out rental valuations and provide information, on a more informal basis, for a variety of customers within the public and private sector. Staff are both home and office based.

During the year the Rent Service:

- Reviewed their health and safety policies.
- Agreed a new code of practice on health and safety with the trades unions.
- Carried out an asbestos review of all buildings.
- Offered an in-house welfare management system linked to external counselling providers to all staff.
- Made significant progress on the Rent Service remote working project.
- Introduced and trialled hand held devices allowing staff to have a live link to the Rent Service network - regardless of their location.

4.5 The Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh has office, classroom and training ground based staff, contractors and visitors. In addition there is a residential area for some staff and all students. There is also a sports facility open to residents and members of the public from the local area. Generic and specific risk assessments exist for these staff and for the facilities provided to the public.

During the year the Fire Service College:

- Established a joint Health and Safety Project Team with the Fire Brigade Union.
- Revised the Health and Safety Policy and developed and implemented risk assessment procedures covering all areas of the college.
- Commenced a rolling programme of ROSPA audits of health and safety management systems.

4.6 The Fire Experimental Unit, also based at Moreton-in-Marsh and at Little Rissington 13 miles away, has 7 in-house staff who are partly office based and partly engaged in experimental work. They rarely have any visitors and only occasionally employ contractors, and their risk assessments and health and safety procedures cover both staff and contractors/visitors.

During the year the Fire Experimental Unit:

- Carried out a review of the Health and Safety Policy, documentation and procedures. There is an ongoing programme of work arising from this review, which is being undertaken in the year 2004/05.

4.7 The Emergency Fire Service at Marchington has office and workshop based staff and contractors. The facility is used for maintenance and storage of fire fighting and international aid equipment. There is considerable industrial activity in the workshops and warehouses. There are also forklift trucks and large vehicles moving about on site. Job specific training, and generic and specific risk assessments exist for these staff.

During the year the Emergency Fire Service:

- Completely reviewed and revised the local Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.
- Provided training to all staff, as necessary, including Health and Safety, Fork Lift Truck driver training, Manual Handling, Display Screen Equipment and First Aid.
- Continued to follow a rolling programme of Risk Assessments and Risk Assessment audit.

4.8 The QEII Conference Centre has a small staff of ODPM (54 in total) and contractors' staff (variable total depending on what is happening at the Centre). The function of this building is to provide conference and exhibition facilities in Central London. The Centre has around 250,000 visitors each year. Generic and specific risk assessments exist for staff and visitors.

During the year the QEII Conference Centre:

- Introduced a new local Health and Safety Policy, endorsed by the four main contractors who have permanent on-site staff.
- The local Health and Safety committee met with representation from all departments and the four main on-site contractors. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Executive.
- Provided all staff with Health and Safety awareness training in January and February 2004. Directors and senior managers received more in-depth training.
- The nominated Health and Safety Officer completed NEBOSH training and assumed responsibility for staff awareness and training.

4.8 Trained First Aiders and Fire/Floor Wardens are in place throughout ODPM.

5. Health and Safety Goals

5.1 The prime goal for the ODPM was to develop and implement a new Corporate Health and Safety Policy that would cover all aspects of the work covered by the ODPM. This document will provide an umbrella for all local Health and Safety policies and commit the Office to continually improve the delivery of a safe working environment.

5.2 ODPM is introducing an occupational health and safety management system based on

OHSAS 18001 - using an Internet based application called ENVOY. This system provides a full suite of functions designed to make the administration of an H&S system easier and more detailed. This includes a monitored auditing function to ensure a reliable, legally compliant and robust Health and Safety Management System. The system is due for a trial audit at the end of March 2005.

6. Progress towards achieving health and safety goals

In May 2003 an ODPM Health and Safety Adviser was appointed. Subsequently a new Health and Safety Policy, fully compliant with Health and Safety Executive best practice was drafted. It was subject to full consultation with the staff representatives through the recognised Trades Unions, which continued into 2004/05. Until the new ODPM Health and Safety Policy was issued, the existing DTLR Health and Safety Policy continued to apply.

The ENVOY system is being populated to ensure that the necessary information is available for the trial audit to be carried out. The publication and promulgation of the new Health and Safety Policy is a fundamental requirement of the OHSAS 18001 system.

7. Arrangements for consulting employees.

7.1 An ODPM Health and Safety Committee has been formed and has met twice (on Tuesday 30th September and on Thursday 27th November) under the joint Chair of Head of ISD and TU Side. The Terms of Reference for this committee are still being formulated.

7.2 There are local Health and Safety Committees at the Planning Inspectorate, the Fire Service College, The Emergency Fire Service, the QEII Centre and all Government Offices. In addition, there is a national Health and Safety Committee for the Government Office Network.

Performance

8. Accidents and incidents - including RIDDOR injuries, illnesses and dangerous occurrences

8.1 During the year April 2003 - March 2004, there were 29 accidents in ODPM HQ buildings, - 21 to staff and 8 to contractors' staff. This figure includes 1 RIDDOR reportable accident - to a member of a Contractor's staff. These figures are very low for the number of staff in ODPM HQ, it is suspected that there is under reporting of minor accidents. A review of management training and extra emphasis on the importance of accident reporting in Induction and Health and Safety Co-ordinators' training will form part of the strategy to improve the reliability of the figures.

8.2 There were 395 accidents in the whole of ODPM, the RCU (including the Government Offices) and the Agencies during the year - 218 (including 4 ill health reports) to staff, 69 to contractors' staff and 108 to visitors. A table showing the causes of these accidents is at Annex 1. There were 10 RIDDOR reportable accidents (2 major accidents and 8 over-3 day absences) and 1 RIDDOR reportable dangerous occurrence. There were no cases of RIDDOR reportable Diseases.

8.3 ODPM Human Resources do not keep records of the number of employee days lost due to work related accidents. These figures are included in the sick absence figures shown below.

8.4 There were no work-related fatalities during the reporting period.

8.5 No enforcement notices were served on ODPM.

8.6 No convictions for health and safety offences were laid against ODPM.

Targets

9. Progress towards specific health and safety plans and objectives.

9.1 During the year ODPM continued to carry out generic and specific risk assessments for staff, contractors and visitors. The Health and Safety Adviser carried out generic - job specific - risk assessments for the Planning Inspectorate. Guidance and advice on the use of mobile phones while operating a motor vehicle was provided for all staff in ODPM who drive as part of their duties - prior to the change to Road Traffic Law that came into effect on December 1st 2003 - which made it an offence to use a hand held mobile phone whilst driving.

9.2 Health and Safety Co-ordinators in ODPM HQ continue to provide robust, successful local input on health and safety matters. They have a vital role in assisting Heads of Units to fulfil their Health and Safety responsibilities. They also have an important role to play in ensuring that Display Screen Equipment risk assessments are carried out, passed on to relevant personnel for further action and then to Human Resources for permanent record purposes. They also ensure that Health and Safety information is passed on to staff within their area of

responsibility.

9.3 During the year regular TU Side safety inspections were carried out jointly with management in all ODPM HQ Buildings. The results were reported to management/FM contractors for action and posted on the ODPM Intranet Site. All minor actions were completed within an acceptable time frame.

9.4 ODPM took part in the European Week on Safety and Health in October 2003, holding a competition for staff on Dangerous Substances. Prizes were awarded to staff in ODPM (HQ), throughout the RCU and GO network and the Agencies.

10. Sick Absence Management in ODPM

10.1 The PIMS System used for recording sick absence data, is shared by ODPM and DfT.

10.2 The average number of working days sickness absence for the Civil Service as a whole rose from 9.2 in 2001 to 9.8 in 2002.

10.3 ODPM HQ's average for 2003/04 was 5.1 days, so is below the Civil Service average. The average for all ODPM including HQ staff, agencies and GOs, RCU etc is estimated to be 4.7 days. (See Annex 2). It is believed that there is under-reporting of staff absence. As with accident reporting, Human Resources are undertaking a review of management training in this area.

10.4 In ODPM (HQ) the total number of days absence due to stress for the year 2003/4 amounts to 1,424. The Office will produce a Stress Policy to tackle sickness absence arising from stress in the workplace in consultation with the TUS.

11. Summary and Future Look

11.1 It can be seen from the metrics collected and highlighted in this report that the Office generally provides a safe environment for staff, visitors and contractors and is responsibly managed through vigilance, co-operation and understanding. The level of reported accidents is low and many of these are very minor in nature. This may be a result of staff not reporting injuries, sickness or near misses, but this is being addressed. More work needs to be done on identifying and quantifying which illnesses are work related.

11.2 We shall remain vigilant and, in partnership with the staff Trades Union Representatives, will seek to use every means possible (training, awareness and sharing best practice) to improve wherever weaknesses in, or improvements to, working processes are either made or identified.

11.3 Work has commenced reviewing the contents of the Office's advice and materials held within Staff Handbooks and training/awareness course. This will be to stress and underpin the Management's commitment to continually improve Health and Safety within the Office.

11.4 The delivery of these commitments will be managed through the implementation and use of a Management System based on the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Schedule

18001 (OHSAS18001).

11.5 The next phase of work within the Office will be a close look at how accidents are reported and how investigations are undertaken. To realise this the role of the H&S Co-ordinators is being improved through access to relevant training and guidance. During the next year (2004/2005) accredited training courses will be run for the development of skills and knowledge of the H&S Co-ordinators.

11.6 With the plans in place and the delivery of outcomes a priority, the Office will be placed to be seen as a leader in Health and Safety and an example of what can be achieved with commitment, active participation and partnership from all involved.

Jean Davis MIOSH

ODPM Health and Safety Adviser

Annex 1

Causes of Accidents to ODPM Staff 2003-2004

Slips trips and falls (level surface)	68
Falls from Heights	8
Struck by falling object	10
Manual Handling	33
Electrical	1
Moving Plant and Equipment	7
Work Related Road Traffic Accidents	13
Chemicals and Dust	4
Burns	25
Other	226
TOTAL	395

Annex 2

Sick Absence for ODPM from April 2003 - March 2004			
	Total days sick - April 2003 to March 2004	Average staff in post - April 2003 to March 2004	Average total sick days per staff member
ODPM HQ Staff	13,182	2,500	5.1
All Staff*	36,282	7,788	4.7

* This figure is calculated from individual figures provided by the various sections and agencies, this information is not held centrally.

