



*Office of the Deputy  
Prime Minister*

*Annual Report of Occupational Health  
and Safety*

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2005/2006





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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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# History

1. The 2005/2006 Annual Report is the third and final report on Health and Safety in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It includes information on the whole of ODPM HQ and its Agencies and the Residential Property Tribunal Service. This report covers the period from 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006. As part of Machinery of Government changes, Communities and Local Government (the Department) was created on 5 May 2006 with a remit to promote community cohesion and equality, as well as responsibility for housing, planning and local government. The period 1st April to 4th May 2006 will be included in the Department's first annual report for 2006/07.

As there is a period of transition from ODPM to the Department, this report will contain references to actions to be taken by the Department rather than ODPM.

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

### 2.1 ODPM's HQ staff

ODPM's HQ Staff located in London, Hastings, Glossop and Hemel Hempstead were mainly office based and regarded as being at low risk. Generic and specific risk assessments existed for these staff. A Staff Counselling and Support Service was available to all ODPM staff. Trained First Aiders and Fire/Floor Wardens were in place throughout ODPM HQ.

### 2.2 Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) and Government Offices (GOs)

Although the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had overall responsibility for the buildings occupied by Government Offices, the GOs carry out functions on behalf of ten 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.

During the year the RCU and GOs:

- Revitalised their Health and Safety Committees both locally and nationally
- Improved the induction process in relation to Health and Safety
- Introduced vending machines selling healthy snacks and worked towards making buildings 'non smoking' by phasing out smoking rooms and providing information to staff who wished to give up smoking.

Future Plans Include:

- Reviewing, building on and improving the processes and initiatives already in place
- Looking at a more co-coordinated approach to Health and Safety across all nine Government Offices.

### 2.3 **Planning Inspectorate**

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 inquiries. 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 for Wales Health and Safety procedures.

During the year Planning Inspectorate:

- Organised a Health Day for staff. Several organisations were represented including Cancer Research and Diabetes UK. 76 Staff attended
- Held Stress Awareness seminars for admin staff
- Ensured that recommendations in ergonomic assessments carried out by the occupational health nurse were always followed up and appropriate equipment ordered without delay
- Reviewed the Health and Safety content of induction courses.

Future Plans include:

- Appointing a new health provider to provide a proper standard of care to staff experiencing health problems
- Appointing and training Health and Safety Co-ordinators to enable PINS to have a proper resource to promote Health and Safety legislation and act as an advisory role to PINS staff
- Updating the Health and Safety Policy to reflect changes in legislation
- Carrying out Lifestyle Screening for Admin staff and Inspectors in PINS by the end of 2006.

### 2.4 **The Fire Service College**

The Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh has office, classroom and training ground based staff, contractors and visitors. In addition there are residential facilities for staff and 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:

- Adopted a new system of Accident Reporting which has led to far more accurate reporting
- Instituted a system of assessing Display Screen Equipment users implementing PDA equipment saving time and resources
- Set up a new monthly Health and Safety Induction Training Day so that all new staff attend
- Appointed a new Health and Safety Officer who has commenced professional training
- Installed two new First Aid Rooms (one on the incident ground and one in the admin A block)
- Installed defibrillator and oxygen therapy equipment and instituted training for anyone who wishes to volunteer to use this.

## 2.5 **The Fire Experimental Unit**

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

During the year the Fire Experimental Unit:

- Secured Head of Division signature to and issuing of the FEU H&S policy document
- Produced generic risk assessments for FEU
- Carried out:
  - Weekly testing of the fire alarm
  - 6 month inspections of
    - lifting tackle & ladders
    - compressors
  - Annual
    - emergency lighting test at the Still Air Facility
    - PAT testing of FEU equipment
    - FEU fire extinguishers testing

- electrical checks on the FEU's demountable pods, Lynton trailer and flammable liquid stores.

Future Plans include:

- Periodic safety inspections of equipment, facilities and buildings as required.

## 2.6 **The Emergency Fire Service**

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

During the year the Emergency Fire Service:

- Continued in its supporting role to DFID
- Organised the closure of the Marchington site

## 2.7 **The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEIIICC)**

The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEIIICC) was an executive agency and trading fund of the ODPM (the Department). It has a small staff of 54 directly employed staff. All other personnel on site are employed by the four specialist contractors and total numbers of staff on site vary depending upon the level of activity at any one time. Generic and specific risk assessments exist for staff and visitors.

The QEIIICC hosts around 400 events each year and attracts over 250,000 visitors annually.

The nature of the conferences and events held at the QEIIICC, and the popularity of the venue, demand that the QEIIICC executive agency pays close attention to all matters of health and safety management.

During the year the QEII Centre:

- Tested a new Permit to Work System which improved general awareness, increased security and provided more control over contractors
- Set up a health and safety email group which allows people to email any concerns or suggestions regarding Health and Safety to the relevant persons
- Notified all contractors, clients etc of Health and Safety procedures that they must follow if they wish to work on site
- Identified that better communication is required between Events and Health and Safety regarding rigging/event set-ups and that more notice is required for review of Method Statements/Risk Assessments provided

- Identified that more control is required over Production Companies when they are setting up for Events.

Future Plans Include:

- Full implementation of the new Permit to Work Scheme
- Review and improvement of all procedures
- Holding more regular Health and Safety Forums to improve the general culture.

## 2.8 **Fire and Resilience Directorate**

The Fire and Resilience Directorate is responsible for three major programmes to enhance the ability of the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to major incidents. These are the New Dimensions, FireControl and FireLink programmes. The Office has legal responsibilities for health and safety issues arising out of its procurement and deployment of new equipment, including providing risk assessments. During the year the Directorate recruited a health and safety adviser, on loan from the Health and Safety Executive, to lead a team to carry out these assessments and ensure the Office's legal duties were complied with. The Directorate leased a new site at Bardon, Leicestershire as the New Dimensions Servicing and Logistics Centre. This replaced the same facility which occupied part of the Marchington site.

During the year:

- The Office co-ordinated the health and safety of its employees and agency staff while the landlords carried out essential fitting out works.

Future plans include:

- Arranging health and safety training for the new site manager and her assistant
- Ensuring the new site is compliant with legislation and good practice.

2.9 Trained First Aiders and Fire/Floor Wardens were in place throughout ODPM HQ and its Agencies. During the year 19 first aiders and 88 Fire/Floor Wardens were trained

## 3. **Health and Safety Goals**

- 3.1 The Office was committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for staff, contractors and visitors. The re-publication of the ODPM Health and Safety Policy in December 2005 focused all staff on the part that they had to play in delivering this goal.
- 3.2 ODPM introduced an occupational health and safety management system based on OHSAS 18001 – using an Internet-based application called ENVOY. This system provided a full suite of functions designed to make the administration of an H&S system easier and more detailed. This included a monitored auditing function to ensure a reliable, legally compliant and robust Health and Safety Management System. The system was given a successful certificated audit in August 2005.

#### **4. Progress towards achieving health and safety goals**

- 4.1 Following publication of the Health and Safety Policy in November 2004, the Office successfully worked with representatives of the recognised Trades Unions to amend the Staff Handbook to reflect the new policy and procedures.
- 4.2 Regular audits and inspections were carried out to ensure compliance with the requirements of OHSAS 18001.

#### **5. Arrangements for consulting employees.**

- 5.1 The ODPM Health and Safety Committee met twice (on Tuesday 17th May and Thursday 8th November 2005) under the joint Chair of Head of ISD and TU Side. Further meetings of this committee were planned at 6-monthly intervals (May and November each year).
- 5.2 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**

#### **6. Accidents and incidents – including RIDDOR injuries, illnesses and dangerous occurrences**

- 6.1 During the year April 2005 – March 2006, there were 46 accidents in ODPM HQ buildings – 37 to staff (including 2 sport related injuries), 5 to contractors' staff and 4 to visitors. In addition, 9 ill health reports (6 staff, 1 contractor and 2 visitors), 2 near misses and 4 incidents that happened outside Office premises were reported. These figures show a reduction of 4 on the previous year and are still very low for the number of staff in ODPM HQ. We continue to emphasise the importance of reporting all accidents in training and induction sessions.
- 6.2 The Planning Inspectorate reported 23 accidents – 19 to staff and 4 to contractors' staff. There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents or incidents.
- 6.3 The Fire Service College reported 78 accidents, 44 to staff, 0 to contractors' staff and 34 to visitors. Of these 41 related to sports activities. There were 38 near miss incidents 11 involving staff, 0 involving contractors' staff and 27 involving visitors. There was 1 RIDDOR reportable fatality – not involving any College staff, contractors or visitors, 3 over three day RIDDOR reportable accidents and 3 RIDDOR reportable Dangerous Occurrences.

Details are contained in Annex 2.

During the year the College also suffered an outbreak of the Norwalk virus – which was reported to the local Environmental Health Department. The College was commended on the way in which it dealt with the outbreak.

- 6.4 The Fire Experimental Unit reported no accidents during the year.
- 6.5 The Emergency Fire Service reported no accidents during the year.
- 6.6 The QEII Centre reported 22 accidents – 2 to staff, 16 to contractors' staff and 4 to visitors. There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents or incidents.
- 6.7 For this reporting period there was a total of 266 accidents in the whole of ODPM, the RCU (including the Government Offices) and Executive Agencies. A table showing the causes of these accidents is at Annex 1

Details of the RIDDOR reportable accidents are at Annex 2.

- 194 (plus 6 ill health reports) to staff,
  - 29 (plus 1 ill health report) to contractors' staff
  - 43 (plus 2 ill health reports) to visitors
  - 1 RIDDOR reportable fatality
  - no RIDDOR reportable major accidents
  - 6 RIDDOR reportable incidents covering over-3 day absences (including 3 GO)
  - 3 RIDDOR reportable dangerous occurrences
  - There were no cases of RIDDOR reportable Diseases.
- 6.8 ODPM Human Resources did not keep records of the number of employee days lost due to work related accidents. These figures are included in the sick absence figures referred to below.
  - 6.9 There were no work-related fatalities during the reporting period.
  - 6.10 No enforcement notices were served on ODPM.
  - 6.11 No Crown Censures for health and safety offences were laid against ODPM.

## Targets

### 7. Progress towards specific health and safety plans and objectives.

- 7.1 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 a thorough audit of all Health and Safety documentation and advice held electronically in ODPM. Visits and advice to all areas of ODPM and the Agencies continued throughout the year.
- 7.2 Health and Safety Co-ordinators in ODPM HQ continued to provide robust, successful local input on health and safety matters. They had a vital role in assisting Heads of Units to fulfil their Health and Safety responsibilities. They also had an important role to play in ensuring that Display Screen Equipment risk assessments were carried out, passed on to relevant personnel for further action and then to Human Resources for permanent record purposes. They ensured that Health and Safety information was passed on to staff within their area of responsibility. 11 Health and Safety Co-ordinators received training during the year. In addition six staff were trained in accident investigation.
- 7.3 A Health and Safety Forum was held in February 2006 for all staff with responsibility for health and safety within ODPM and its Agencies. Following the success of this event they will be held twice a year in future.
- 7.4 During the year regular TU Side safety inspections were carried out jointly with management in all ODPM HQ Buildings. No major actions were identified and those minor actions that were identified were completed within an acceptable time frame. The results were reported to management/FM contractors for action and posted on the ODPM Intranet Site.

### 8. Sick Absence Management in ODPM

- 8.1 The PIMS System used for recording sick absence data, was shared by ODPM and DfT.
- 8.2 The average number of working days sickness absence for the Civil Service as a whole fell from 10 in 2003 to 9.1 in 2004, then rose to 9.8 in 2005.
- 8.3 The Planning Inspectorate reported total Sick absence of 7951 days – the average number of working days lost to sick absence was 9.4 days per member of staff (5% of working time lost).
- 8.4 The Fire Service College reported Sick absence of 3646 days – the average number of working days lost to sick absence was 13.02 days.
- 8.5 The QEII Centre reported Sick absence – the average number of working days lost to sick absence was 10.9 days.
- 8.6 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was created on 29th May 2002. The number of days lost due to sickness are contained in the annual report *Analysis of Sickness Absence in the Civil Service* published by the Cabinet Office. The report for calendar

year 2005 into number of days lost due to sickness in the Civil Service was published on 18th September 2006. The average number of working days sickness absence for the Office was 5.7 days per member of staff in 2005 (total number of days lost was 13,939 for 2,453 ODPM staff), compared to 9.8 for the Civil Service as a whole (total number of days lost – 5,100,837). Of this, 11% of sickness absence spells in 2005 were longer than 5 days and 89% five days or less.

8.7 In ODPM (HQ) the total number of days absence reported and categorised by staff as being due to stress, and state of anxiety for the year 2005/6 was 1553. With regards to stress and stress policy ODPM did not yet have a specific policy which dealt with tackling stress – rather it was seen in holistic terms as part of the wider sickness absence policy, although the Office, in consultation with the TUS, produced an Interim Stress Policy in 2004/5 to tackle sickness absence arising from stress in the workplace. The Office took issues of stress very seriously and realised that it did not just affect the individual members of staff concerned but also those with whom they worked – regard also had to be taken on the effect on the business. Ill health resulting from stress caused at work has to be treated the same as ill health arising from other causes present in the workplace and is a recognised health and safety issue. This means that employers have to take reasonable care to ensure that people’s health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained pressure arising from factors such as the way work is organised or the way in which people deal with each other at their work. There is a particular need for care where employees are known to be vulnerable to stress-related illnesses. Equally, employees have a responsibility to speak up on their own behalf when they feel that pressures at work may be affecting their health. Currently the Department is in discussion with the Health and Safety Executive with a view to introducing a more formal policy tackling stress.

8.8 During the year the Office:

- Introduced improvements in the PIMS system for managers to record sickness absence
- Introduced Sickness Absence Management Workshops.

8.9 Future Plans include:

- The Department has produced a Draft Workplace Stress Action Plan, and this will be discussed with the TUS and HSE. A Working Group will be set up to look at this and related issues in a holistic way across the Department.

## 9. Summary and Future Look

9.1 It can be seen from the data collected and highlighted in this report that the Office generally provided a safe environment for staff, visitors and contractors and was responsibly managed through vigilance, co-operation and understanding. The level of reported accidents remained low and many of these were very minor in nature. The Department will continue to emphasise in training and induction the importance of reporting both accidents and near misses.

- 9.2 The Department will 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.
- 9.3 Work has continued reviewing the contents of the Department's advice and materials held within Staff Handbooks and training/awareness course. This will be to stress and underpin management's commitment to continually improve Health and Safety within the Department.
- 9.4 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).
- 9.5 The general competence of those staff directly involved in managing Health and Safety in the Department will continue to improve, due to relevant and suitable Health and Safety training.

9.6 **The Department recognises it can play a part in improving the health of staff**

In 2006/07 we will adopt a two pronged approach to reducing sickness absence rates.

- Firstly to provide managers with improved skills and processes to manage sickness absence when it occurs; and
- Secondly to take steps where we can to improve the health of staff and prevent them becoming sick.

- 9.7 With the plans in place and the delivery of outcomes a priority, the Department 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/DCLG Health and Safety Adviser

## Annex 1

<b>Causes of Accidents to ODPM Staff, Contractors' Staff and Visitors 2005–2006 (2004/5)</b>		
Slips trips and falls (level surface)	62	(59)
Falls from Heights	1	(9)
Struck by falling object	6	(13)
Manual Handling	19	(31)
Electrical	0	(1)
Moving Plant and Equipment	9	(27)
Work Related Road Traffic Accidents	2	(2)
Chemicals and Dust	2	(5)
Burns	32	(26)
Other (undifferentiated in 2004/5.)	16	(195)
Minor cuts and bruises	99	
Sprains and strains	16	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>(379)</b>

## Annex 2

<b>RIDDOR REPORTABLE ACCIDENTS AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES</b>	
<b>FATALITIES</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>FSC</b>	Two light aircraft collided while flying over the College grounds and one pilot was killed. This was reported under RIDDOR and investigated by the Air Accident Investigation Branch
<b>OVER 3 DAY ABSENCES</b>	
GO	Bruising to toes from a flask being dropped onto them. Sent to A&E for treatment
GO	Lifting a crate/desk damaged ligament
GO	Fainted and bumped head and cheek
FSC	Manual Handling Severe Strain to Back Lifting Heavy Objects
FSC	Crushed fingers
FSC	Manual Handling Torn Ligaments in Right Arm
<b>DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES</b>	
FSC	Failure of Breathing Apparatus on Fire Ground
FSC	Failure of Breathing Apparatus on Fire Ground
FSC	Failure of Breathing Apparatus on Fire Ground