



Societal Risk: A View From Government

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Early Societal Risk Work



- Risk assessment methods developed in the 1960s and '70s, but difficult and costly to perform
- HSE has developed new techniques
- This allowed 55 societal risk sites to be identified, giving a better appreciation of the existence of risks

- Societal risk is cross-governmental work which HSE is taking forward
- CD212 – Government believed that the issue of societal risk required public consultation
- The particular socio-political aspects of necessitate input from a wide range of groups

Buncefield MIB Report



- Government decision to go ahead with societal risk work following CD212
- The Buncefield MIB report supported this in principle, stating that;

‘societal risk should be integrated into the land use planning system around major hazard sites’

Development of Methodology



- The emphasis is on getting the methodology as close to 'right' as possible
- Development can not be done by HSE in isolation
- It requires the balancing of numerous considerations
- Two advisory groups established;
 - Local Planning Authority Focus Group
 - Technical Advisory Group

A Synthesis of Interests



- Public demand for safety and the perception of security, as well as economic activity
- Industry requires economic viability
- HSE's overarching aim is to protect the public
- But, this is done by balancing the prevention of accidents with the continued viability of industry
- A balance must be struck – this requires all information on risk and benefit be considered

Balancing Competing Concerns



- BERR active in HSE's work, contributing where necessary
- The two technical advisory groups identify and consider competing interests
- Input has been – and continues to be – sought from stakeholders
- This all contributes to creating a robust system of risk assessment

In Summary...



- Societal risk is conceptually uncontroversial
- Nonetheless, it may clash with desires for development in some places
- Development of a methodology is difficult, as it must accommodate multiple factors
- It is important that stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute, in order to produce a consensual outcome