

Health and Safety Commission Paper		HSC/06/39	
Meeting Date:	9 May 2006	Open Gov. Status:	Fully open
Type of Paper:	Below the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Public Reporting

A Paper by Colin Douglas

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Cleared by Colin Douglas on 23 March 2006

Issue

- 1) Proposals for co-ordinating the suite of annual publications reporting on the objectives and performance of HSC/E and the challenges facing the wider health and safety community.

Timing

- 2) For consideration on 9th May 2006.

Recommendation

- 3) That the Commission agrees the approach to public reporting set out in paragraph 7 below.

Background

- 4) Currently HSC/E produces a number of publications each year which report on a range of activities and, to varying degrees, describe the impact our work is having.
- 5) These annual products include:
 - a) Report on progress in implementing the HSC Strategy – published in March
 - b) Annual Report – published in June
 - c) Fatal Injuries statistics (fatalities across all sectors) – end of July
 - d) Penalties & Offences Report (setting out statistics of enforcement actions) – published in October
 - e) Statistics Highlights (overview of accident and ill-health statistics) – published in November
 - f) Various sector specific annual reports (e.g., HMRI, NII)

- 6) It is widely agreed that this range of reporting is not coherent and needs to be reduced and co-ordinated to a greater degree than is currently the case.

Argument

- 7) It is proposed, therefore, that we focus our main public reporting around November by:
 - a) Stopping (over time) non-essential pre-November reports
 - b) For those reports that still need to be produced before November (e.g., the Annual Report), downgrading the emphasis we place on them as public reporting tools
 - c) Ceasing production of a separate Offences & Penalties report, and instead incorporating it into the Statistical Highlight reports in 2006.
 - d) Producing in the second half of November (from 2006 onwards) a *Performance Report* which summarises: how we have progressed the Strategy, what we have delivered over the course of the year, what the statistical highlights tell us about accident and ill-health trends, what the major challenges for the health and safety system are for the years ahead and what, therefore, our key priorities for the coming year will be in delivering our Strategy.
 - e) Looking at the focus and format of the sector specific annual reports to ensure that if we produce them, they are consistent in look and approach and carry key corporate messages.
- 8) This approach would mean that the Annual Report in June would be produced with minimum fanfare as a formal document to be laid before Parliament. It would also be made available on the HSE website for members of the public who wished to see it. However, we would not actively promote it. In this way, we can maintain it as a comprehensive document of record, whilst also discharging our statutory obligations to publish it as soon after the financial year as possible. This approach is consistent with the approach adopted for last year's Annual Report.
- 9) Similarly, the second year progress report on the HSC Strategy was produced in April of this year as a report to the Minister with advice about the key themes arising from our successes/challenges. Along with the report, we made proposals for activity over the coming months to communicate its messages through various stakeholder conferences and events, etc. However, we did not seek to distribute this report widely.
- 10) It is intended that the key content from the Annual Report and the Strategy progress report (and the statistics produced later in the year) would be fed into the November *Performance Report*, which we would promote heavily.
- 11) The *Performance Report* would be a short document – i.e., no more than 20-24 pages, including strong visual images. The target audience for this would be our key stakeholders (at corporate, programme, regional and sector levels). November is the optimal date for producing this since we would have the key performance information from the Highlight Statistics, and we would publish in advance of the pre-Christmas publicity graveyard.
- 12) In order to ensure that this report is well constructed, balanced, and has impact, we have started to plan its production now, subject to Commission approval.

Consultation

13) This paper has been produced by Communications Directorate in consultation with Strategy Division, Communications Delivery Service, PEFD, OPSD and CoSAS, Fit 3 and Policy Programmes. The recommendations were approved by the HSE Board at its meeting on 1st March.

Presentation

14) This paper sets out a more rational approach to HSC/E's annual reporting to stakeholders. Annual/performance reports tend not to attract a huge amount of public interest. However, they are important as a means of sharing information on progress with a wide range of stakeholder groups and organisations that we work closely with.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

15) Production and distribution costs for the proposed *Performance Report*, would be an estimated £10-15k. Savings have already been generated from reducing the size of the Annual Report. Communications Delivery Service estimate that by restricting production input to a reasonable level to achieve a quality of product similar to last year, and by reducing the print run to 500 copies, savings of £9K will be achieved. The ceasing of a separate Offences and Penalties report would also save in staff time and effort (this document is currently published through the web).

16) However, it is important to be clear that the case for the *Performance Report* should not be made on the basis of achieving savings from the Annual Report. Efficiency savings in the production of the Annual Report can be made regardless of the decision on producing a *Performance Report*, and the estimates for the *Performance Report* are very rough since this would be the first year of producing it.

Environmental Implications

17) Reduction in print run on the Annual Report would result in saving in use of paper, although this might be offset by the production of the new *Performance Report*. The new *Performance Report* would be produced on environmentally friendly paper.

Other Implications

18) The purpose of producing a short, lively performance report and overview of the health and safety system is to set out clearly how we are doing and the key challenges that face all parts of the system. By its very nature, therefore, it will not include everything that we do. There is a risk, therefore, that those who do not feature in this document might feel that their work is being devalued. Whilst not being insensitive to this risk, we should avoid producing an encyclopaedia of HSC/E work activity simply to satisfy all internal stakeholders.

Action

19) If the Commission agrees the recommendations in paragraph 3, the Communications Directorate lead a cross-HSE co-ordinating team to implement the approach set out in this paper.

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