

Health and Safety Executive Board Minutes		HSE/04/M14	
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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

HSE Board

Minutes of the HSE Board meeting held on Wednesday 3 November 2004 in the Fortune Room, Rose Court at 9.30am.

Present

Timothy Walker
Jonathan Rees
Alex Brett-Holt
Nick Starling
Jane Willis
Vivienne Dews
Chris Willby
Laurence Williams

Also attending

Item 3: Richard Lewis, Hilary Evans, Stephen Swan
Item 4: Richard Lewis
Item 5: Brian Fullam, John Ewins

Minutes – Rupert Lown

Apologies: Justin McCracken, Sandra Caldwell, Allan Sefton, Colin Douglas

1 Minutes of HSE Board held on 6 October 2004

1.1 The minutes were agreed.

2 Improving HSE's Health and Safety Performance – B/04/050 – presented by Timothy Walker

2.1 European Health and Safety week had been a success with a number of events occurring within HSE and involving HSE staff at external events.

The Board wished to thank all the HSE site co-coordinators who had arranged or contributed to make the week a success.

2.2 A further RIDDOR report had been received. Analysis of the last month's incidents indicated a number linked to road related risk. The Board discussed that staff were expected to attend Advanced Driver Training and undergo retraining at an appropriate interval. There was an expectation that should an incident occur, the need for retraining should be considered by line management.

Action HSU to review uptake of the defensive driving course to ensure staff attend on a suitable basis

2.3 The Board agreed that incidents within HSE required managerial judgment as to their reportability. When managers were unsure whether an incident was reportable or not they should seek advice from the Health and Safety Unit in

Bootle.

Action RPD to review the guidance to HSE managers to ensure the appropriate line manager reports incidents in line with RIDDOR

2.4 Discussion raised the following points:

Cabinet Office have issued the Health and Safety statistics for Government. HSE's performance is a poor performer when compared to equal sized Departments.

It was agreed that HSE should explore the reasons for the difference although this may include how data is collated and recorded. It was acknowledged that this was unlikely to explain all the reasons behind seasonal variations in sickness absence.

RPD hope to implement new data collection software during the next work year subject to Board approval.

A new Occupational health advisor is to start at Rose Court. Staff have been failing to attend Occupational Health advisor appointments. RPD are to explore mechanisms for ensuring Line Managers are kept informed when staff fail to attend appointments.

Action Jonathan Rees and Vivienne Dews to discuss and agree the message regarding Central Government health and safety statistics

3 Freedom of Information – presented by Richard Lewis, Stephen Swan and Hilary Evans

3.1 The Board received an update on Freedom of Information (FOI). The principal points raised included:

FOI is implemented in less than 60 days and is part of the Modernising Government Agenda.

FOI allows the public access to information based on the right to know rather than the need to know. There are a number of absolute exemptions but most are subject to a 'Public Interest' test.

HSE is preparing for implementation. Procedures and systems are being improved principally for handling requests, making disclosure decisions and dealing with complaints and appeals. The updated guidance will be placed on the Intranet when it is prepared.

Senior Managers have been under taking training on decision-making on FOI. SCS have been training as Appeals Officers.

The Board were reminded of the need to lead by example with respect to FOI.

3.2 Discussion raised the following points;

All information prepared and sent to both the Commission and the Board will be subject to disclosure.

HSE must improve on recording the reasons why a decision was made, not just decide to do or not do something.

An Internal appeals process is being prepared. Currently the Executive deals with such matters but with increased disclosure levels, Board members and SCS members may have to play a part in the process.

FOI can mean disclosing documents - this may be the easiest route. However it is acceptable to disclose the requested information from a document.

The Section 75 order, which has been laid by DCA, will be to relax the prohibitions on disclosure found in Section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, to allow HSE to disclose for any purpose and not just for the purposes of health and safety. This is expected to happen in time for 1 January 2005.

FOI timescales are tighter than Open Government standards, although it is possible to extend these when necessary.

HSE must demonstrate its leadership in its behaviours, standing by recorded decisions to act or not act. When the decision turns out to be incorrect, managers must acknowledge the mistake and apologise if required. Staff must improve the recording of intuitive decision-making.

The Board agreed:

HSE wants to comply with the requirements of Freedom of Information.

Staff must consider why they would not disclose a document.

To take a paper reviewing the first months working of the Act between March and June depending on the existence is sufficient reviewable information.

4 Information Retention and Disposal – B/04/052 – presented by Richard Lewis

4.1 HSE has a number of IT systems that retain information. We need to apply good standards across these in order to manage the whole life of our data. These proposed policies will apply to COIN and EDRM (Electronic Document and Records Management system) when they come on-line.

4.2 It was proposed that HSE follow two basic lines; application of statutory retention periods or central government standards, e.g. the National Archives. Otherwise a standard retention period of 7 years would be adopted, with only a few variations.

In practice this means that within COIN, data would be held on the live system for three years after the last record was made before being warehoused. If after 7 years there was no update, the data would be deleted.

Within EDRM information would be deleted after 7 years following the closure of a folder. Information would only be retained for longer following a review.

4.3 Discussion raised the following points;

HID, FOD and RI accepted the proposals but requested that data on Prosecutions/Safety Cases may have to be retained for a greater degree of time.

NSD accepted the proposals but requested that their work recording data was required. (It is currently an application that can't be migrated to COIN).

CoSAS accepted the proposals but requested further discussion with respect to statistical data, but this should align with National Statistics Office standards.

4.4 The Board agreed the proposals, subject to the points made in discussion.

5 Managing Information and Knowledge in HSE – B/04/056 – presented by John Ewins and Brian Fullam

5.1 The paper recommended a more coordinated approach to managing HSE's knowledge base with a nominated Board Champion and the setting up of a small team to support a lead on this matter.

The work stems from the Statistics and Informatino Programme Board. Knowledge management is vital to allow staff to have access to the right information and to use that knowledge when obtained. Currently, staff find it difficult to identify the best sources of knowledge and to find the information they need to do their jobs. Not knowing what work is underway elsewhere leads to duplication of effort on a number of topics across the organisation.

5.2 The paper proposed the creation of a team to work up proposals to improve the culture within HSE for managing information and knowledge and develop better ways of doing this. However, in late discussions with BSD it was agreed that further work was needed to identify ways for improving knowledge management, quantifying the possible benefits and costs. To do this it was recommended that a "virtual" team was established which would identify the way forward, building on the numerous initiatives across the Directorates. The team would bring its proposals back to the Resource and Delivery Group for consideration;

5.3 Discussion raised the following points:

- The approach using a virtual team to develop more detailed proposals was agreed, reporting back to RDG before the end of the planning year
- Further action was needed to improve Intranet access
- RI are piloting information management by sharing documents
- HID / NSD have a number of ideas on how to improve knowledge management
- The virtual team would allow access to these and other local initiatives
- When the proposals return to the Resource and Delivery Group, there needed to be examples of how other organisation manage knowledge in order to bench mark the options
- The proposals should consider both the culture of HSE and practical measures to improve performance.

Action John Ewins and Steve Dennis will arrange a virtual work team and decide upon its leadership. Each Directorate to nominate a representative for the team. The team will report back to the Resources and Delivery Group by March 2005

6 Review of Alcohol and Smoking Policies – B/04/048 – presented by Julie McDougall

6.1 **Smoking:** the paper was presented to the Board as HSE's current approach is out of date and out of line with our current advice to Industry. The two key issues were whether to:

Allow staff to smoke when there is an impact upon other's health caused by passive smoking and the continued source of ill feeling of time taken by staff to have smoking breaks.

The current approach of HSE is to not allow smoking at the workplace, except in designated smoking rooms and not to expose staff to smoke.

The Board declared that apart from one member they were non smokers

Discussion raised the following points:

- Evidence of passive smoking continues to increase in strength
- HSE policy is out of line with the advice we give to industry
- DWP have a policy of no smoking rooms in new premises and smoking rooms are not replaced in refurbished premises
- HSE staff should not be allowed to smoke on or about its premises
- Debiting time for those who smoke was not a sensible approach
- HSE should encourage and support those who try to stop smoking
- The unions should be consulted with regarding the Board decision.

The Board agreed subject to consultation with the TU that:

New and refurbished buildings would not have smoking rooms. Smoking around HSE buildings should be discouraged, but not banned. Support would be provided to those staff who wished to cease smoking. Staff were not to be debited time unless it impinged on their work performance.

Action Personnel to discuss HSE's proposed smoking policy with the trade unions

6.2 **Alcohol:** This was brought to the Board as a result of HSE Wales receiving a silver award for health and safety during 2003. A factor for not achieving a gold status had been our acceptance of alcohol at work.

HSE's policy needs clarifying to enable staff to readily understand its application.

Discussion raised the following points:

- Board members did not believe there to be a significant alcohol abuse problem. Those with a drink problem should be identified via normal management functions and supported to resolve the issue. It was accepted that it could be difficult to identify affected staff
- The Nuclear, Rail and Major Hazards Industries have expectations and

legal requirements for staff to be alcohol free. As a consequence HSE expects staff to be alcohol free but is probably not explicit enough in its own policy on this fact

- The Civil Service culture of drinking at lunchtime has changed dramatically
- Celebrating work success is vital to staff morale and this is often done with alcohol, predominantly thought this was at the end of the day or early evening
- Any policy should support managers help to resolve staff affected by alcohol.

The Board agreed that the policy should be clarified for staff. The organisation's expectations should be clear, compliance with specific legal requirements upon industry should be met as should no drinking and driving.

Further expectations were:

No drinking before visiting dutyholders.

Celebratory drinks at HSE premises were acceptable, these should be held at the end of the workday unless staff working hours prevented it.

Action Personnel to discuss HSE's expectations of a alcohol policy with the trade unions

7 Options for increasing HSE's Human Factors Resources – B/04/058 – presented by Chris Willby

- 7.1 The paper was put to the Board without time to consult and generate all arguments. To delay would jeopardize the arrangements for securing all actions required before September 05 when it was hoped that HSE staff could commence training to become Human Factor specialists.
- 7.2 There was recognition throughout HSE that the organisation required an increase of its human factor resource.
- 7.3 There are currently 21 chartered or registered Human factor experts in HSE; only 13 of these have inspectorial experience. It was proposed that HSE increase the number to 30. It has proved difficult to recruit staff in this area and contracting has not provided the required benefits.
- 7.4 Proposals were put to the Board for staff to be recruited internally, trained via a modular course to allow an effective mix of on and off the job training over a two-year period.
- 7.5 Discussion generated the following points:
- Linkages had not been drawn to the workforce strategy, there was little detail on the work such staff would undertake or justification for the numbers proposed. It was understood that a University had been approached to run a course without the procurement process having been followed

- A business case was required to justify the proposed spend
- Once trained how did HSE propose to retain the staff and ensure we achieved 'experienced' specialist staff.

Action Chris Willby to produce a business case for Human Factors training and ensure that Procurement procedures are implemented.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 The strike of 5 November was discussed.

Prospect's proposed ballot was outlined.

HSE had received a letter from Michael Richardson detailing a possible settlement; confirmation was required.

8.2 The stress standards were being launched with positive take up so far.

8.3 The Board agreed that the SCS awayday had been successful, in particular the second day - which had ended with a real buzz.

Action DG's Office to circulate proposed agenda for December Board meeting to Board members. A draft agenda for January to be provided to the December meeting

The next meeting would be the Finance Board on 17 November and main Board on 1 December