

<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>		<b>Operational Circular</b>	
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Target audience:  
HSAOs  
HSAO Line Managers  
Head of Operations  
Divisional Development Managers

## **THE ROLE OF BAND 5 HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARENESS OFFICERS**

This operational circular sets out the role of Band 5 Health and Safety Awareness Officers (HSAOs) working in FOD divisions. It does not cover the role of Compliance Officers in London Division. This OC also gives specific guidance on the activities HSAOs should undertake when working in general manufacturing and construction. As the role is still under development this document will be revised 6 months after issue.

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1 HSAOs are Band 5 visiting officers who undertake proactive engagement with duty holders in small firms, specific target groups (e.g. young people) and others whom we are seeking to work with to influence standards of workplace health and safety. A more detailed description of the characteristics of their role is given in [Appendix 1](#).

2 HSAOs work alongside inspectors and other administrative staff to deliver [HSC's Strategy for workplace health and safety to 2010](#) and beyond including the priority work arising from HSC's Strategic Programmes and core activities, as set out in FOD's Operating Plan. They free-up inspectors' time for the work that requires an inspector's warrant, knowledge and expertise, i.e. to enable the most cost-effective resource to be used to meet a specific business need.

3 It is not intended that HSAOs will normally have line management responsibilities.

### Management arrangements for HSAOs

4 Divisions can allocate HSAOs amongst their Field Management Units (FMUs) as needed to fulfil local delivery of strategic programme and core work.

5 HSAOs should be task managed by the relevant FMU leader. They are a flexible resource and are expected to contribute to work outside of their 'home' FMU in accordance with HSE's needs – for example contributing to the work of external relations teams or helping other FMUs with specific projects/campaigns.

### The HSAO role

6 The overall role of HSAOs is to undertake proactive work, which promotes the benefits of health and safety and increases HSE's interaction with duty holders, stakeholders and others by:

- acting as the main contact with small firms<sup>1</sup> providing advice and guidance through site visits (including carrying out the contact procedure) or head office visits in the case of contractors;
- arranging and delivering seminars, workshops, health & safety awareness days and other events;
- gathering and maintaining intelligence on workplaces to ensure appropriate interventions are made;

- carrying out and assisting with centrally-driven programme and project working, including projects to develop the HSAO role;
- managing/co-coordinating other staff to deliver agreed objectives and ensuring work is carried out in accordance with relevant quality procedures;
- developing partnerships with stakeholders including work with Local Authorities.

7 In addition to the above, HSAOs will be warranted to investigate and enforce cases of non-compliance with Employers Liability Compulsory Insurance (ELCI) legislation. They are not warranted for any other purpose and can only enter premises with the consent of the occupier.

8 Depending on divisional priorities HSAOs may support inspectors and work with Local Authority enforcement officers on more complex operational work.

9 The exact mix of the above activities will vary according to specific needs of the team in which they are working. The appendices [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#) contain menus of activities for HSAOs to undertake in their work in manufacturing and construction.

10 Divisions can use HSAO resources flexibly to meet their needs, providing that the work meets the general aspects of their role as described above and the appendices of this document. HSAOs are a proactive resource supporting delivery of the Strategy and the Strategic Programmes and should not be engaged in reactive work beyond that specified in the appendices of this document.

Limitations on the role, indemnification and dealing with obvious unsafe working practices

11 HSAOs are not warranted and therefore not indemnified. So unlike inspectors, they cannot (and should not) insist on a dutyholder taking a specific course of action. They should not interpret technical advice or express opinions on compliance with the law. HSAOs are expected to refer people to relevant guidance and respond to straightforward enquiries where interpretation is not required.

12 When visiting, HSAOs must make it clear that they are awareness officers and they are not there to inspect. Their role is to raise awareness, not seek out specific areas of non-compliance or inadequate control of risk.

13 However if, during a visit they encounter obvious unsafe working practices that pose an immediate risk to health and safety, they should advise the dutyholder to stop the activity or, if it is about to commence, not to allow it start until further risk assessment or reference to HSE guidance has been undertaken. If the dutyholder chooses to ignore their advice, they should contact an inspector by telephone to discuss the circumstances. In deciding what constitutes

obvious and immediate unsafe working practices, HSAOs should base their decision on the knowledge gained from their training with regard to:

- a) risks to their personal health and safety;
- b) the hazard topics covered on the visit proforma of contact procedure.

14 When visiting workplaces, HSAOs will need to make an overall judgment about health and safety standards and decide/recommend the appropriate course of action for HSE's onward interaction with the dutyholder (eg. whether an inspector needs to visit).

### Training

15 A comprehensive [training programme](#) for HSAOs is on the learning and development area of the intranet. This covers general aspects of health and safety and those hazard topics encountered in manufacturing. Where HSAOs work in other sectors, their training may include (or substitute) some elements of the general programme. Line managers are responsible for identifying training needs and liaising with local trainers for delivery of the training.

### Health and safety

16 HSAOs and their line managers should follow the guidance for [Band 5 Visiting Officers](#) on health and safety area of the intranet.

### Work recording

17 HSAO should record their work against the relevant FMU in accordance with FOCUS/COIN instructions.

### Identification and warrants

18 All HSAOs should carry identification cards, obtainable by sending a passport-sized photo to FOD Operational Strategy Unit, Room 908, Daniel House, Bootle. These cards confirm HSAOs are acting on behalf of HSE.

19 ELCI warrants are provided locally by the Division Director's Office.

**Cancellation of Instructions:** OC 18/6 and OC 18/6 Supplement 1

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[1] Under established definitions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), small firms are those with less than 50 employees.