

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

REVISED POLICY STATEMENT ON OPEN GOVERNMENT

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is committed to being open about what we do. This is a statement of our policy on openness.
2. The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) to ensure that employers, employees and the public are kept informed about health and safety at work matters.
3. In practice, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carries out this duty on HSC's behalf.

Our Aims

4. Our aims are to:
 - share what we know;
 - find out what information held by us people need, and try to provide it;
 - inform, consult and engage with others on important proposals;
 - consider information and views received about health and safety; and
 - be open about how and why we make decisions.
5. We believe these aims will help us
 - develop closer partnerships with everyone concerned with health and safety at work;
 - be accountable;
 - be trusted as a confident and independent enforcement and regulatory body; and
 - succeed in delivering better health and safety.
6. We welcome the opportunity given by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to review our openness policy. We will make all information we hold available, unless the Act prevents us. Situations where it is unlikely that we will be able to disclose information include when:
 - the law prevents it; or
 - we consider that harm or prejudice of a type identified by one or more of the exemptions found in Part II of the 2000 Act (such as prejudice to enforcement or prosecution, harm to people's health and safety, breach of confidence, prejudice caused by the disclosure of information in respect of which a claim to legal

professional privilege or, in Scotland, to confidentiality of communications could be maintained) would be caused by its release.

These aims and principles apply to all of HSE's activities and the points below explain some of the ways in which this will be achieved.

Providing Information

Publication Scheme

7. As required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, HSE/C operates a Publication Scheme that explains:
 - what information we make available, and how to obtain it;
 - what information we do hold is available from our offices or website;
 - what information we provide free; and
 - what we charge for, and how much we charge.
8. Once information is listed and available under the Scheme it is exempt from the FOI Act requirements to supply information on request. In these circumstances inquirers will be advised how or where to get the information they want.

Sharing Knowledge

Reports on Incidents

9. HSE investigates many incidents, accidents and dangerous occurrences at work, and publishes reports:
 - (a) when HSC has directed HSE to investigate and make a 'special' report under the HSW Act;
 - (b) where it is clearly in the public interest that a report should be published, for example:
 - (i) where an accident gives rise to general public or local alarm leading to a need for explanation;
 - (ii) where we need to satisfy the public that the matter has been thoroughly investigated and all avenues for further action identified; and
 - (iii) where lessons for improving health and safety have been learnt and should be widely circulated.

Research

10. We carry out scientific research into health and safety issues and publish the results. The criteria for carrying out research are published on the HSE website.

Receiving Views and Information

11. We want to receive views from as wide a range of people as possible. Their views will be taken into account when decisions are made.

Making Decisions

12. We make information available about our decisions through:

Meetings and Papers, Minutes, etc of Meetings

The agendas, papers and minutes of our Board meetings are available on the HSE website.

The HSC has recently introduced mainly open HSC meetings as a major demonstration of the openness of our approach.

Industry Advisory and Topic Groups (non HSC Advisory Committees)

13. HSE works with various Industry Advisory and topic groups. These are often cross Departmental. They exist to encourage joint participation of representative groups in particular industries and sectors. Details of the topic groups, minutes of meetings, guidance, advice and other issues are held on the HSE Website.

HSE's Strategies and Plans

14. Details of HSE's Strategies and Plans are also available on the HSE Website. Comment is welcomed.