

## **HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN DEFENCE**

### **Policy Statement by the Secretary of State for Defence**

1. I make this Policy Statement for all Health, Safety and Environmental matters in Defence because, as Secretary of State, I am answerable to Parliament for such matters, and to comply with a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. In doing so, I emphasise the importance I attach to the health and safety of all those who deliver Defence activities, and those who may be affected by Defence activities, and to the protection of the environment.
2. This Policy Statement is a commitment of my personal leadership in this area and I rely on all those also in leadership roles to ensure my policy is applied throughout Defence.

### **GENERAL DUTIES**

3. I require that:
  - We minimise work-related fatalities, injuries, ill-health, and we reduce health and safety risks so that they are as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and tolerable.
  - We minimise adverse effects on the environment and implement the best practicable environmental options.
  - The default position is that within the United Kingdom (UK) we comply with all applicable health, safety and environmental legislation.
  - In circumstances where the nature of Defence and Security activities inevitably conflict with safety requirements and thus Defence has Derogations, Exemptions, or Dis-applications from health, safety and environmental legislation, or where other circumstances indicate the need for Defence regulation of activities, we maintain Departmental arrangements that produce outcomes that are, so far as is reasonably practicable, at least as good as those required by UK legislation.
  - Overseas, we will comply with the laws of Host States, where they apply to us, and in circumstances where such requirements fall short of UK requirements, we will apply UK standards so far as is reasonably practicable to do so.
  - Those of us in leadership positions, must lead by example ensuring safety and environmental matters have the priority they deserve, while building and maintaining a culture that empowers everyone to contribute and own safety and environmental objectives, who are enabled to raise concerns to help improve our culture.
  - We take care of the health and safety of ourselves and others who may be affected by our acts or omissions at work, we protect the environment, and we co-operate with the arrangements that are in place to enable us to discharge the duties placed on us.

### **GOVERNANCE**

4. As the Department's most senior official for health, safety and environmental matters, the Second Permanent Secretary is to ensure that effective management

arrangements are in place to achieve necessary compliance with this Policy Statement, which may be amplified as appropriate, drawing on advice as necessary from across the Department. This includes:

- chairing the Defence Safety and Environment Committee (DSEC).
- safeguarding and supporting the Defence Safety Authority (DSA)'s independent role as defined in its Charter.
- provision of functional leadership of health, safety and environment from the Head Office including through dissemination of relevant policy and setting of relevant standards.
- setting and championing health, safety and environment professional standards.
- inclusion of health, safety and environment in the Department's organisational performance management arrangements.
- obtaining Defence Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC) assurance of the Department's approach to safety and environmental governance.

5. I appoint a Director General Defence Safety Authority (DG DSA) to lead an Enabling Organisation to provide assurance that my policy is being promulgated and implemented in the conduct of Defence activities. This is achieved through three distinct functions: the regulation of compliance with my policy where Defence has authority; the investigation of safety-related accidents, incidents and near misses; and, through providing Third Line of Defence assurance of compliance with Defence regulations and policy. In this respect I require DG DSA to produce an Annual Assurance Report to support the Second Permanent Secretary's role as the Department's most senior official for health, safety and environment in being assured of safety and environmental management and for onward consideration by the Defence Board.

6. I require the Director Defence Safety (DS), amongst their other responsibilities, to support and provide competent advice to the Second Permanent Secretary in delivering health and safety functional leadership from the Head Office. This is to include the development of the Department's Safety Management System, supporting policy, governance and risk management, professional development and support to acquisition safety.

7. I require the Director Levelling Up, the Union, Climate Change and Sustainability (LUCC&S), amongst their other responsibilities, to support and provide competent advice to the Second Permanent Secretary in delivering environmental management leadership from the Head Office. This is to include the development of the Department's Environment Management System, supporting policy, governance and risk management, and professional development aligned to the departments climate change and sustainability objectives.

8. I require the senior leader of each Defence organisation to set down and implement health, safety and environmental management arrangements through Safety and Environmental Management Systems for activities in their areas of responsibility. In doing so they are to ensure that commanders and managers to whom they may delegate safety and environmental authority are competent and have adequate resources at their disposal and are able to manage safety and environmental risks appropriately.

9. In addition to their legal safety responsibilities, I require that each Defence organisation's most senior leader be appointed as the Senior Duty Holder (SDH) for military activities where the senior leader considers the activities:

- are justified and present a credible and reasonably foreseeable Risk to Life (RtL); and
- where the Duty of Care, or other statutory arrangements and/or the control of risks are considered to be inadequate and require enhanced safety management arrangements; or
- are mandated through regulation.

10. If a SDH considers that a risk from a military activity cannot be mitigated so that it is ALARP and tolerable, they have the delegated authority to stop those activities and to inform the Second Permanent Secretary and refer it to me. Where a risk has a pan-Defence or cross-cutting impact this must also be raised to the DSEC.

11. Any senior leader of a Defence organisation proposing organisational change where there is potential for significant impact on safety or environmental standards and performance is to ensure that, before being implemented, the impacts of the proposed change are properly assessed through an Organisational Safety Assessment (OSA) to demonstrate that any detriment to these standards and performance are mitigated to be ALARP and tolerable.

12. The detailed organisation and arrangements that amplify this Policy Statement are to be set out in Defence policy (Joint Service Publications), Defence regulations and in Defence organisation level policy.

## **REVIEW AND AMENDMENT**

13. I require Director DS and Director LUCC&S to ensure the currency of this policy. They may propose amendments at any time, consulting with the Second Permanent Secretary. This policy remains in effect through any changes of the Second Permanent Secretary, DG DSA, Director DS or Director LUCC&S. This policy will also be reviewed at least every third year regardless of any interim revisions.



**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE**

**2 January 2024**