



Ministry
of Defence

JSP 815

Defence Safety Management System (SMS) Framework

Foreword

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The requirement to keep people safe and protect the environment – at home and overseas – has been set by the Secretary of State (SofS) for Defence through their Health, Safety & Environmental Protection (HS&EP) Policy Statement. The Policy Statement is a commitment of personal leadership by the SofS and their reliance on Commanding Officers, line managers and all those in leadership roles to make sure that HS&EP policy is applied throughout Defence.

Defence has an ambition to put safety at the heart of how it operates and has established safety as one of Defence's key functions to provide the policies and processes. This enables Defence to deliver the safety elements of the SofS HS&EP Policy Statement commitments and to discharge the duty of care that Defence has to its people, the public, and the environment.

The Safety Function is responsible for setting and owning the policy, strategy and governance framework for Safety across Defence and is the functional owner of Joint Service Publication (JSP) 815 and underpinning safety policy. I recognise that the Safety Function will need to work as a strong horizontal function to achieve pace, integration, and cohesion to drive exploitation at the leading edge.

This document seeks to accelerate us in developing the maturity of the function by describing in detail how the Safety Function works which will enable us to have a joined-up approach and capability to deliver the Defence Vision for Safety as set out in the Defence Safety Functional Strategy where:

We will establish a world leading safety culture across Defence, where the value of safety is recognised by everyone. In doing so, we aim to eliminate fatalities whilst enhancing capability and minimise injury through learning.

Preface

Purpose

1. This document sets out the Defence Safety Management System (SMS) Framework. It details how the Safety function contributes to the overall outputs of Defence, including how it interfaces with Commands, DNO, EOs and other functions and sets the policy framework to be used by all Defence organisations to direct and control safety management within their organisation to make sure Defence operates safely, in line with the Defence Plan.
2. The SMS Framework described in this JSP is the overarching authority for safety management across Defence. The information contained herein provides a means to assist Defence organisations to put in place good practices and drive continual improvement in safety performance within their organisation.
3. It provides the direction that must be followed and the guidance and good practice that should be followed by all Defence organisations to assist them with the successful implementation of the requirements set out in the corresponding 12 Elements, which in turn provides expectations and performance statements that must be achieved to move Defence to a highly resilient and proactive organisation. The policy has been developed to align with ISO 45001 requirements.

Authority of this Defence SMS Framework

4. The document takes its authority from the Secretary of State's (SofS) Policy Statement for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection (HS&EP) in Defence. All Defence organisations should be aware of the Defence SMS Framework requirements and demonstrate their compliance with it.

Jurisdiction and legislation

5. Any reference within the SMS Framework to compliance with legislation generally refers to UK law. Where organisations conduct overseas activity or have an overseas presence, the SofS Policy Statement requires them to consider the latest Defence policy, guidance on applying UK standards and the host nation's relevant safety expectations, particularly where these are not aligned.

Related Documents

6. This JSP is to be read in conjunction with the Safety Functional Strategy which sets out our long-term ambition, priorities and high-level ways of working and the Safety Function operating Model which describes roles and responsibilities and the role the Safety function plays in protecting our people, managing risks, maintaining our reputation and delivering our Defence goals.

Further Advice and Feedback – Contacts

7. This document will be reviewed annually or more often if needed. The owner of this document is the Director of Defence Safety (DS). For further information or advice on any aspect of this publication or to provide feedback on the content, contact: the Directorate of Defence Safety (DDS) Team at COO-DDS-GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk.

8. Where this document contains references to policies, publications and other JSPs which are published by other Functions, these Functions have been consulted in the formulation of the policy and guidance detailed in this publication.

Disclaimer

Nothing contained within this document removes the requirement on anyone to comply with applicable Statutory legislation, the SofS's Policy Statement, other JSPs or Defence Regulations.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessing Statement

This policy has been equality and diversity impact assessed in accordance with Departmental policy. This resulted in a Part 1 screening only completed (no direct discrimination or adverse impact identified). This policy is due for review in 2026.

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Amendment record

This framework has been reviewed by the Directorate of Defence Safety (DDS) together with relevant subject matter experts and key safety stakeholders. Any suggestions for amendments should be sent to COO-DDS-GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk using the following format:

- a. subject: Defence Safety Management Framework Restructure;
- b. sender's reference;
- c. date;
- d. Element, page, and paragraph being addressed; and
- e. comment.

Version No	Date Published	Text Affected	Authority
1.0	Sep 22	Release of new Defence SMS Part 1	Dir HS&EP
1.1	7 Jun 23	Restructure to Defence SMS Volume 1	DDS
1.2	10 Sep 24	Annual revision and combined element and assurance framework	DDS

Terms and definitions

General safety terms and definitions are provide in the [Master Glossary of Safety Terms and Definitions](#) which can also be accessed via the [GOV.UK](#) website.

Note: Throughout this document, the term 'Defence organisations' refers to Military Commands, Top Level Budgets (TLBs), Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO) and Enabling Organisations (EOs) collectively. As set out in the terms and definitions glossary link above.

Must and should

Where this SMS Framework says must, this means that the action is a compulsory requirement.

Where this SMS Framework says should, this means that the action is not a compulsory requirement but is considered good practice.

Scope

The policy contained within this JSP:

- a. applies to all those employed by Defence (military and civilian) including those under the age of 18 (for example recruits and apprentices).
- b. applies to those working on behalf of, or under the supervision of Defence (for example, contractors or visitors).
- c. applies to all Defence activities carried out in any location (UK or overseas).
- d. is not written for young persons in the cadet forces, Defence-run schools, nurseries and so on; those organisations must maintain their own safety policies and governance and must provide statutory compliant infrastructure and appropriate safe systems of work. They may use material from this chapter as a reference point, but where appropriate their respective policies should be adapted to meet the needs of young persons and to follow any applicable Department for Education guidelines or legislation.

Introduction

1. The Defence Safety Management System (SMS) Framework is the guiding principles by which all Defence organisations should manage the interrelated parts of their business in order to conduct and manage activities safely. Each Defence organisation is expected to develop and maintain an organisational Safety Management System (SMS) that reflects their activities and support the Defence vision for Safety. Each organisational SMS should relate back to this overarching policy framework document.
2. Responsibility for the management of health, safety, and environmental protection (HS&EP) is derived from the Secretary of State for Defence's (SofS) Policy Statement. The SofS Policy Statement sets out the commitment and role of the Defence organisations senior leaders to ensure that safety policies and regulations are applied throughout Defence and that their Defence activities are delivered in line with the Defence SMS Framework and their own Organisational SMS.
3. The amplification of the SofS Policy Statement is contained in Defence policy for Health Safety and Environmental Protection (HS&EP) which also sets out the general Organisation and Arrangements (O&A) for Defence to manage HS&EP. The minimum necessary management arrangements for safety policy are set out in JSP 815. The management arrangements for Environmental Protection policy are laid out in JSP 816.
4. The term **safety** is used throughout JSP 815. Safety in this context encompasses **health** by providing safe systems of work and thus protecting people from harm and ill-health. However, there will be some references to health and safety throughout where statute (for example the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA74)) or Defence policy and regulation defines them.
5. Other aspects of health are covered by the Healthcare & Medical Operational Capability Function set out in [JSP 950 \(Medical Policy\)](#) and the People Function set out in [JSP 661 \(Health and Wellbeing\)](#).

Purpose

6. This policy document, JSP 815 provides the framework that Defence should meet to deliver its 'duty of care' responsibilities towards personnel. It also contributes towards demonstrating compliance both with the requirements of the HSWA74 and relevant Government policy, Defence policy and regulations.
7. Assurance of Defence activities, the Defence SMS Framework and the Defence organisations SMS are carried out in line with the principles of the three Lines of Defence (LOD) as set out in the HMT [Orange Book – Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts](#) and further detailed in JSP 815 Element 12.
8. Defence organisations can prevent acute ill-health issues to their personnel from occurring by implementing safety control measures in order to reduce risks to 'as low as is reasonably practicable (ALARP)'. Some safety risks for example; exposure to asbestos, noise and vibration may take a long time before ill-health becomes apparent and therefore Defence organisations can also understand chronic ill-health issues by implementing health surveillance and monitoring.

9. The Defence SMS Framework is structured around 12 Elements. The direction that must be followed and the guidance and good practice that should be followed, can be found in the JSP 815 Elements.

10. The Defence SMS Framework comprises of the JSP 815 Framework together, with the [Defence Safety Function Operating Model](#), JSP 375, JSP 376 and JSP 426. The Defence safety policy and regulation framework can be seen below in Figure 1.

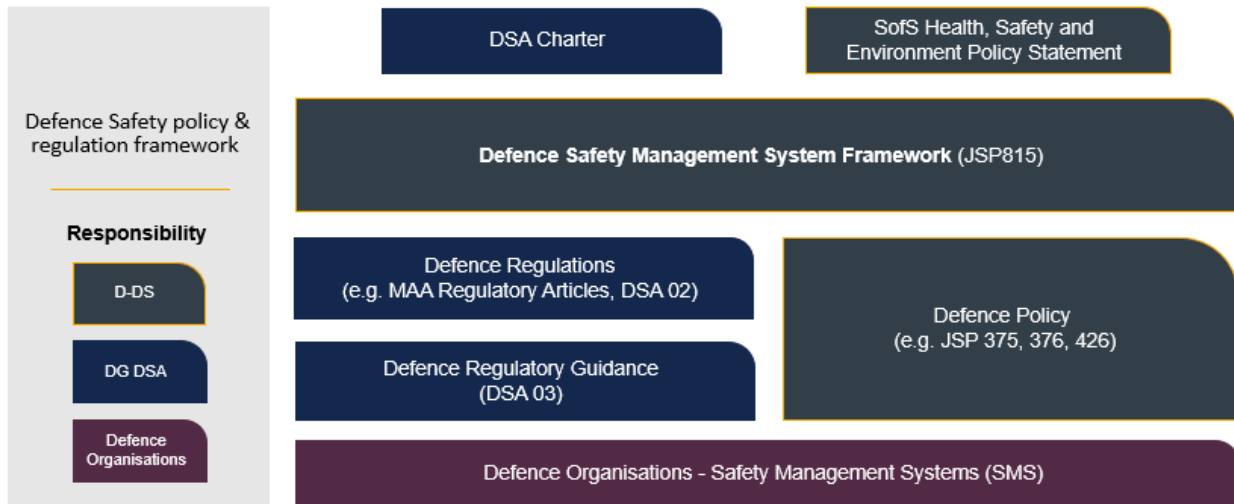


Figure 1 - Defence safety policy and regulation framework

11. Where possible, the Defence SMS Framework seeks to avoid prescribing approaches or requirements, as these may not be generally applicable or relevant for all users but sets goals and provides direction on what good would look like.

12. This SMS framework covers both safety and system safety and as such for the purposes of this JSP the elements and expectations apply equally.

Management system approach

13. A management system comprises a range of practices, processes, documents, and information systems used to organise, direct and control safety management within an organisation.

14. The Defence SMS Framework provides direction on the components needed for a cohesive and appropriate safety management system to be introduced and maintained across Defence organisations. The framework encompasses the safety management elements required to operate in an effective and consistent manner throughout the Department.

15. The Defence SMS Framework is based on the four-stage 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' approach (Figure 2) which helps to deliver and continually improve the Department's performance relating safety safety):

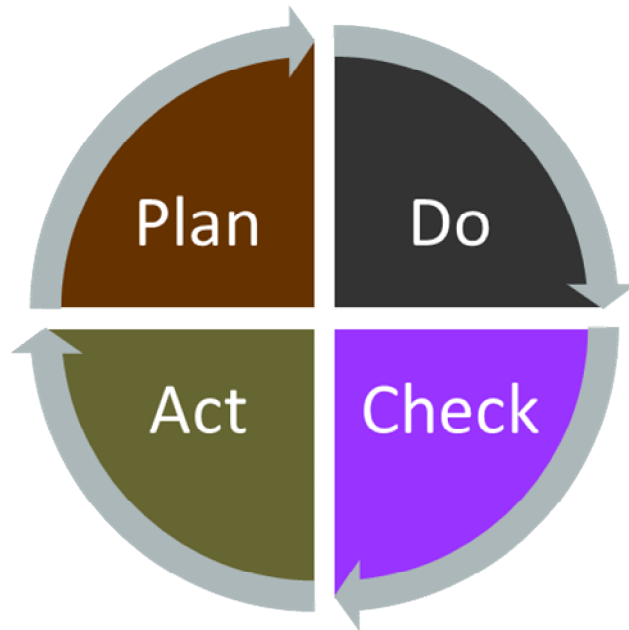


Figure 2 - Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle

16. The Director for Defence Safety (Director DS) will oversee the process of implementing the Defence SMS Framework as part of the wider Defence Safety Functional strategy.

17. The Defence SMS Framework:

- a. is non-prescriptive and based on a devolved accountability model of safety management, allowing each Defence organisation to manage safety consistent with Defence requirements, through their own specific organisational governance and operational context;
- b. outlines responsibilities and obligations each Defence organisation must consider when managing safety, and includes a set of expectations and performance statements that all Defence organisations must conform to when establishing governance frameworks, developing safety management strategies, processes and performance indicators to regularly monitor and improve their safety management; including the need to establish systems to identify and address performance failures;
- c. is aligned to ISO 45001, the international standard for safety management, but has some additional and different requirements to meet the specific needs of Defence.

18. JSP 815 is a goal-based approach to managing safety in Defence setting the safety ambition of Defence; it enables each Defence organisation to have the flexibility to develop their own tailored SMS and pathways to meeting that ambition.

Role of the Defence Safety Function

19. Defence function owners – including the Director DS – are responsible for developing the relevant mechanisms to support their Functional Strategy and are empowered to implement these mechanisms across Defence to drive improvement including:

- a. responsibility for Defence Safety Functional Leadership across Defence, on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer (COO).
- b. responsibility for the corporate governance of Defence Safety, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary.
- c. owning the Defence Safety Functional Strategy, the Safety Operating Model and the overarching Defence Safety Management System (SMS) Framework.

20. The Defence Safety Function checks safety performance through the appointed persons within the Defence organisation who are responsible for Second Line of Defence (2LOD) assurance including through undertaking an annual assessment of their organisation's performance against the Defence SMS Framework. Organisations which consistently meet and can evidence the performance statements at substantial and full assurance level are likely to perform more strongly under scrutiny.

Structure

21. The Defence SMS Framework is divided into 12 **elements** to cover Defence organisation activities. Together, the elements provide those conducting their own SMS with a holistic approach to consider how they will control, manage and respond to relevant safety risks. The 12 elements which form the Defence SMS Framework are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3 - Defence Safety Management System (SMS) Framework -12 Elements

22. Each element is supported by a series of **expectations** which describe the activities expected to be in place¹ within each Defence organisation’s safety management systems. They outline typical processes, governance arrangements and other behaviours which are indicators of successful management systems.

23. Each expectation is further articulated by **performance statements** which set out how compliance and continual improvement is demonstrated. Examples are given of performance across a maturity continuum, from those that would lead to no assurance, through limited, substantial, to full assurance.

24. The 12 elements and their supporting expectations are shown in Figure 4.

E1 Leadership, Governance and Culture	E1.1 Tone from the top E1.2 Continual improvement E1.3 Accountabilities and responsibilities E1.4 Leadership visibility E1.5 Strategic objectives E1.6 Resilient safety management	Element 1
E2 Organisation and Dependencies	E2.1 Safety Management System E2.2 Roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities E2.3 Allocation of resources E2.4 Sharing information E2.5 Standards of Safety Management E2.6 Consultation with the workforce E2.7 Changes to structure and personnel E2.8 Dependencies and interfaces	Element 2
E3 Legislation, Policy, Regulations and Guidance	E3.1 Compliance with legislation E3.2 Compliance with expectations E3.3 Defence organisation’s policy and guidance E3.4 Communicating compliance requirements E3.5 Review of policies and guidance E3.6 Exemptions, waivers, and concessions	Element 3
E4 Risk Assessments and Safety Cases	E4.1 Risk Profiles and Hazard Identification E4.2 Managing risks E4.3 Management of risk E4.4 Communicating risks and controls E4.5 Improving risk management E4.6 Changes affecting the Defence organisation E4.7 Safety case	Element 4
E5 Supervision, Contracting and Control Activities	E5.1 Delegation of authority E5.2 Competence of delegated authority E5.3 Risk elevation E5.4 Letter of delegation E5.5 Mitigation of risks to ALARP E5.6 Ceasing activities E5.7 Safe Systems of Work (SSW)	Element 5

¹ some of the elements may not be fully applicable for all Defence activities, for example with Adventurous Training, Element 8 is often not required.

E6 Personnel Competence, Resources and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E6.1 Resources E6.2 Responsibilities, accountabilities, and delegation E6.3 People development E6.4 Training programme E6.5 Competency assessment 	Element 6
E7 Equipment Design, Manufacture and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E7.1 Equipment lifecycle risks E7.2 Risk mitigation E7.3 Compliance with statute and Defence regulation E7.4 Equipment maintenance E7.5 Physical equipment changes E7.6 Supply chain risks and dependencies E7.7 Lessons learned E7.8 Equipment and systems integration risk 	Element 7
E8 Infrastructure Design, Build and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E8.1 Infrastructure lifecycle risks E8.2 Risk mitigation E8.3 Compliance with statute and Defence regulation E8.4 Infrastructure maintenance E8.5 Physical infrastructure changes E8.6 Supply chain risks and dependencies E8.7 Lessons learned 	Element 8
E9 Performance, Management Information and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E9.1 Monitoring performance E9.2 Reviewing performance E9.3 Management information review E9.4 Leadership performance decisions 	Element 9
E10 Accident / Incident Management and Emergency Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E10.1 Accident / Incident reporting E10.2 Accident / Incident recording E10.3 Accident / incident investigation E10.4 Implementation of actions and learning E10.5 Emergency and business continuity plans tested 	Element 10
E11 Communications and Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E11.1 Stakeholder identification E11.2 Stakeholder engagement E11.3 Stakeholder collaboration E11.4 Accessing information E11.5 Raising concerns anonymously 	Element 11
E12 Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E12.1 1st Line of Defence (LOD) assurance E12.2 2LOD and 3LOD assurance E12.3 Annual self-assessment E12.4 Leadership review of SMS E12.5 Corrective action 	Element 12

Figure 4 - Defence SMS Framework 12 Elements and supporting Expectations

Using the SMS Framework

25. It is the responsibility of each Defence organisation to develop and implement an SMS that meets the 12 elements, and accompanying expectations, for their organisation.
26. Defence organisations should adopt an evidence-based approach to their own SMS. Several data sources, information and knowledge are likely to be used to measure an organisation's current safety performance.
27. The documentation listed within each element provides Defence organisations and assessors with an initial starting point to assess an SMS; the evidence to support performance assessment against each expectation and to determine overall performance against each element.

Relationship to the Defence Environmental Management System (EMS)

28. JSP 815 sets out the Defence Safety Management System Framework. The Defence Environmental Management System (EMS) Framework is set out in JSP 816.
29. The JSP 816 Defence EMS Framework contains 12 element titles supported by expectations and performance statements aligned to the SMS but with the content amended to reflect environmental management and policy requirements. In so far as is practicable, both JSP 815 and JSP 816 have been similarly structured. In view of the similarities in structure, Defence organisations may choose to combine the SMS and EMS into a Safety and Environmental Management System (SEMS) as appropriate for their organisation.
30. JSP 816 should be read in conjunction with other Defence policy where appropriate; such as, but not limited to JSP 418, JSP 426, JSP 392 and JSP 850.

Assurance stages

31. Performance statements are provided on a maturity continuum aligned with the MOD's assurance stages. These stages are sequential and build on all previous stages i.e., an Organisation can only achieve "substantial assurance" once the expectations and requirements of "moderate assurance" have been achieved and so on.
32. Figure 5 sets out some of the typical characteristics of processes and controls for each level and aligned with the assessment criteria of the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA).

Assessment and criteria to determine the level of assurance of Defence Function/TLB/HLB/EO key controls and compliance requirements	
Assessment (GIAA aligned)	Criteria
Substantial	<p>You have robust evidence to demonstrate that prescribed policies, processes and key controls that should be operating in your area are fully embedded.</p> <p>You have robust evidence to demonstrate that policies, processes and key controls actually help you manage your key risks.</p> <p>You have robust evidence to demonstrate that the policies, processes and key controls are actually operating as intended and no weaknesses have been identified.</p>
Moderate	<p>You have evidence to demonstrate that prescribed policies, processes and key controls that should be operating in your area are fully embedded but these could be improved.</p> <p>You have evidence to demonstrate that these policies, processes and key controls actually help you manage your key risks but these could be improved.</p> <p>You have evidence to demonstrate that the policies, processes and key controls are actually operating as intended, but have identified some minor areas of noncompliance with the defined policies, processes and key controls.</p>
Limited	<p>You have some, but not enough evidence that prescribed policies, processes and key controls are operating and are embedded.</p> <p>You do not have confidence that the policies, processes and key controls are designed to actually help you manage your key risks.</p> <p>You have evidence to demonstrate that the policies, processes and key controls are not actually operating as intended or not operating in numerous instances.</p>
Unsatisfactory	<p>You have evidence that the prescribed policies, processes and key controls are lacking or not well defined or not actually embedded.</p> <p>You have evidence that the policies, processes and key controls are defined, but as designed, do not help you manage your key risks.</p> <p>You have evidence that the policies, processes and key controls are not measured to be able to assess compliance or are not being adhered to.</p>

Figure 5 - Assurance Levels