

# HEALTH AND SAFETY IN DEFENCE

## Policy Statement by the Secretary of State for Defence

1. I make this Policy Statement for all Health and Safety matters in Defence because, as Secretary of State, I am ministerially and legally responsible for the conduct of the Armed Forces and the broader MOD and answerable to Parliament for their actions. In providing this policy statement, I emphasise the importance I attach to the health and safety of all members of the Armed Forces and MOD employees, and anyone who may be affected by Defence activities.

2. This Policy Statement is a commitment of my personal leadership and legal accountability in this area and I rely on all those in leadership roles to ensure my policy is applied throughout Defence. I also expect all members of the Armed Forces and MOD employees to both co-operate and act in accordance with the principles of this policy so that the MOD can perform and comply with its health and safety obligations.

### **GENERAL DUTIES**

3. I require that:

- We minimise work-related fatalities, injuries, ill-health, and that all personnel ensure that any health and safety risks that we are responsible for are mitigated so that the risks they pose are both as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and that the residual risk is tolerable to take in to account the corresponding need to conduct the relevant activity.
- The default position is that within the United Kingdom (UK) we comply with all applicable health and safety legislation.
- Where Parliament has included a Derogation, Exemption, or Dis-application from health and safety 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. These Departmental arrangements will be delivered through Defence policy and Defence regulation.
- 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 has the priority it deserves, building and maintaining a culture that empowers everyone to contribute and own safety objectives, and who are enabled to raise concerns to help improve our culture, whilst being risk sensible in relation to the military imperative.
- We take care of the health and safety of ourselves and others who may be affected by our acts or omissions at work, and we co-operate with the arrangements that are in place to enable us to discharge the duties placed on us.

## GOVERNANCE

4. I appoint the Permanent Secretary (PUS) to oversee the Defence Safety Management System on my behalf. PUS 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 Committee (DSC).
- Safeguarding and supporting the Defence Safety Authority (DSA)'s independent role as defined in its Charter; the DSA has the right of direct access to raise safety concerns with me.
- Provision of functional governance of health and safety from the Department of State including through dissemination of relevant policy and setting of relevant standards.
- Setting and championing health and safety professional standards.
- Inclusion of health and safety in the Department's organisational performance management arrangements.
- Obtaining Defence Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC) assurance of the Department's approach to safety governance.

5. Through the DSA's Charter, I appoint its Director General (DG DSA) to provide assurance that my policy is being promulgated and implemented in the conduct of Defence activities. This is achieved through three distinct functions: regulation of defined Defence areas, assurance of Defence safety and investigation of safety related incidents. In this respect, I require DG DSA to produce an Annual Assurance Report as a means to assess the Department's safety performance, which will be considered, and acted upon, by Defence senior officials.

6. I require the Director Defence Safety (DS), alongside their Functional responsibilities, to support and provide competent advice to PUS in delivering health and safety functional leadership from the Department of State. This is to include the maintenance of the Defence Safety Management System framework.

7. I require all senior leaders in Defence to comply with relevant Defence Regulations, the Department's Safety Management System Framework, supporting policy, governance and risk management requirements. Additionally, and as required, they must set down and implement health and safety management arrangements that are consistent with these requirements for activities in their areas of responsibility. In doing so they are to ensure that commanders and managers to whom they may delegate management of safety are competent and have adequate resources at their disposal to be able to manage safety risks appropriately.

8. Each of the PUS, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), National Armaments Director (NAD) and Chief of Defence Nuclear (CDN) plays a critical role in managing safety and owe a Duty of Care for the personnel under their control or personnel affected by the activities they direct.

9. As an enhancement to the management of duty of care owed, the most senior leader in each Defence organisation is the Senior Duty Holder (SDH) for military activities where the senior leader considers the activities:

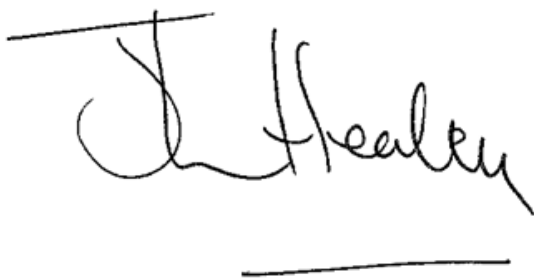
- are justified and present a credible and reasonably foreseeable Risk to Life (RtL) and
- where the standard Duty of Care arrangements are considered to be inadequate and require enhanced safety management arrangements; or
- are mandated through Defence regulation.

10. If a SDH considers that a risk from a military activity cannot be mitigated so that it is ALARP, they must stop those activities, inform PUS, CDS/CDN/NAD as appropriate and escalate it to me. Equally, if an SDH considers the residual risk is ALARP but beyond their tolerability, they must inform PUS and CDS/CDN/NAD as appropriate and escalate to me.

11. If a senior leader of a Defence organisation is proposing organisational change where there is potential for significant impact on the MOD's management of safety, they must ensure that the impacts of the proposed change are properly assessed through an Organisational Safety Assessment (OSA) to demonstrate that any detriment to the management of safety are mitigated to be ALARP. This work must be completed before any change is implemented.

## **REVIEW AND AMENDMENT**

12. I require PUS to ensure the currency of this policy. They may propose amendments at any time and I expect in doing so, they consult with DDS, DG DSA and other relevant Defence stakeholders, including Trade Union representatives. This policy remains in effect through any changes of the PUS, DG DSA or Director DS. This policy will also be reviewed at least every third year regardless of any interim revisions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Healey', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE**

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**