

30 Permit to Work

This chapter is split into two parts:

Part 1: Directive. This part provides direction that you **must** follow to help you comply with (keep to) health and safety law, Government policy and Defence policy.

Part 2: Guidance. This part provides the guidance and good practice that **should** be followed and will help you to keep to this policy.

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[Annex A – Flow Chart: Is A Permit To Work Required?](#)

[Annex B – Chapter 30 – Assurance Checklist](#)

Amendment record

This chapter has been reviewed by the Directorate of Defence Safety & Support (DDSS) together with relevant subject matter experts and key safety stakeholders. Any suggestions for amendments to this chapter **should** in the first instance be directed to the Defence organisation’s [Safety Centre/Team Group Mailbox](#) and with their approval, sent to People-DDS-GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk.

Version No	Date of publishing	Text Affected	Authority
1.2	Oct 20	Interim update post-handover of Policy from DSA to D HS&EP.	D HS&EP
1.3	29 Jun 26	Release of two-part chapter structure.	Dir-DSS

Terms and definitions

The following table sets out definitions of some of the key terms used in this chapter. The current general safety terms and definitions are provided in the [Master Glossary of Safety Terms and Definitions](#) which can also be accessed on [GOV.UK](#).

Competent person	“The combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability, can also affect someone’s competence”. (See www.hse.gov.uk/competence/what-is-competence.htm for information on competence.)
Permit to Work (PTW)	A permit to work is a documented procedure that authorises certain people to carry out specific work within a specified time frame. It sets out the precautions required to complete the work safely, based on a risk assessment. It describes what work will be done and how it will be done.
Person in Charge (PiC)	A competent person identified on the Permit to Work who is responsible for directly overseeing those undertaking the associated task / activity and making sure that the work is carried out according to the Permit to Work, risk assessment and safe systems of work.
Sanctioning Officer	A person who has been delegated responsibility by the accountable person to sanction higher risk activities that require a Permit to Work.

Must and should

Where this chapter says **must**, this means that the action is a compulsory requirement.

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

Scope

The policy contained within this chapter:

- a. applies to all those employed by Defence (military and civilian) including reservists and those under the age of 18 (for example recruits and apprentices).
- b. applies to all 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) and at all times of the year.
- d. is not written for young persons in the cadet forces¹, 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.

Assurance

The application of the policy contained within this Chapter **must** be assured (that is, its use **must** be guaranteed). As part of their overall assurance activity, the commander, manager, or accountable person **must** make sure that this policy is followed and put into practice effectively. Assurance **must** be carried out in accordance with [JSP 815 \(Defence Safety Management System\) Element 12 – Assurance](#).

A chapter assurance checklist can be found at [Annex B](#). Please note its use is not mandatory, but it can provide helpful evidence to assist in the assurance and conformance against the policy direction within this chapter.

Alternative acceptable means of compliance

This policy is mandatory across Defence and the only acceptable means of compliance (AMC) is attained by following the directive set out in this chapter. However, there may be circumstances where a small number of military units may be permanently unable to comply with (keep to) parts of the policy. In such circumstances an alternative AMC process is set out in the [JSP 375 Directive and Guidance](#).

Equality Analysis

The policy in this Chapter has been subject to an equality analysis in accordance with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and Departmental Policy.

¹ Guidance for cadet forces is set out in JSP 814 (Policy and Regulations for Ministry of Defence Sponsored Cadet Forces).

Part 1: Directive

Introduction

1. This chapter sets out the general procedures and guidance for the use of Permits to Work (PTW) to manage hazardous activities, further details on the specific application of Permits to Work for high risk activities on the Defence estate are set out in the relevant chapters of JSP 375, Volume 3.
2. The MOD has a statutory duty to provide and maintain plant and systems of work, that are; so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health. For high-risk activities, it is good practice to set-up a PTW system.
3. A PTW system is a formal documented safety procedure, forming part of the Safe System of Work, which ensures that all the necessary actions are taken before, during and after hazardous work is undertaken, for example hot work (welding, cutting or grinding), working at height, working in confined spaces and so on.
4. The harmonisation of PTW systems between different locations can provide a familiar format and assist personnel moving between locations to understand the required controls and procedures to manage high risk activities. As PTW systems become more complex, it is essential to coordinate them and understand interdependencies through a structured, risk-based approach that provides assurance that a project, system, or facility is safe and environmentally friendly throughout its lifecycle. It is therefore recommended that all new PTW systems or the revision / review of existing PTWs use the principles, guidance and templates contained within this chapter.
5. A PTW is an effective means of controlling hazardous work activities and is a key element of the hierarchy of risk controls and the general principles of prevention². A PTW is a formal written authority to a named competent person to closely control an activity or process, to which, following a risk assessment and the formulation of a Safe System of Work or a method statement³, a high level of risk still exists. Although a PTW is the formalisation of a Safe System of Work it is not a guarantee of absolute safety.

When should a Permit to Work be used?

6. A PTW should be used whenever there is intention to carry out any work which may adversely affect the safety of personnel, the environment or plant and equipment where assessment and the existing Safe System of Work do not fully mitigate the level of risk. A PTW is a normal part of good practice used as one of many risk control measures for activities such as maintenance work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides further guidance on PTW in [HSG 250 – Guidance on permit-to-work systems](#).

² [Management H&S at Work Regulations 1999, Schedule 1](#)

³ A method statement is a document that describes how a job will be carried out safely by detailing the sequence of work, identifying the hazards involved and the control measures required to reduce the risks.

7. It is advisable to use PTWs when two or more individuals or groups of people, possibly from different trades or different contractors, need to co-ordinate their activities to ensure that they do not compromise the safety of each other; each will be issued with a permit. This will apply equally when there is a transfer of work and responsibilities from one group to another. A flowchart determining if a PTW is required can be found at Annex A of this policy.

Key health and safety legislation

8. The [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act \(HSWA\) 1974, Section 2](#) places general duties on employers for their employees so that 'it shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare at work of all of [their] employees' and, under [Section 3](#), persons not in their employment who may be affected.

9. There is also a duty on employers under the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations \(MHSWR\) 1999](#) to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. As such, Defence requires commanders, managers and accountable persons to make sure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out in order to mitigate health and safety risks to the personnel under their area of responsibility. Defence safety risk assessments **must** be carried out in accordance with [Chapter 8](#) (Risk assessment and safe systems of work) of JSP 375 Volume 1.

10. The [Secretary of State \(SofS\) for Defence Policy Statement on health and safety](#), sets out SofS's commitment for Defence to comply with all the applicable health and safety legislation when in the United Kingdom (UK). When 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.'

Policy Statements

11. Defence has established the following policy statements, which **must** be followed.

- a. **Policy Statement 1.** The accountable person **must** make sure that, where necessary, Permit to Work procedures under their area of responsibility are in place and that Sanctioning Officers are formally appointed to evaluate and sanction Permits to Work on their behalf.
- b. **Policy Statement 2.** The Sanctioning Officer **must** be competent to undertake the role to which they have been formally appointed, they are the only person with the delegated authority to issue or withdraw a Permit to Work. The Permit to Work **must** be signed by the Sanctioning Officer to provide authorisation for the work to proceed and when the work has been completed.
- c. **Policy Statement 3.** Commanders and managers **must** make sure that any task requiring a Permit to Work is suitably and sufficiently risk assessed, with an identified Person in Charge assigned to supervise the task.
- d. **Policy Statement 4.** An identified, competent, Person in Charge **must** be assigned to supervise the task requiring a Permit to Work.

- e. **Policy Statement 5.** All personnel involved in the Permit to Work **must** comply with all information, instruction and training, including Safe Systems of Work and / or method statements.

Policy Statement 1

The accountable person **must** make sure that, where necessary, Permit to Work procedures under their area of responsibility are in place and Sanctioning Officers are formally appointed to evaluate and sanction Permits to Work on their behalf.

12. The accountable person **must** make sure that:
- a. where necessary, Permit to Work (PTW) procedures are in place under their area of responsibility for all applicable high risk areas;
 - b. any area within their unit, site, establishment or platform where a PTW is required has clear and unambiguous signage identifying the relevant hazard(s) and access restrictions;
 - c. the PTW system is adequately resourced and supervised, including limiting concurrent live permits or providing additional competent supervision during peak activity; and
 - d. the PTW system includes monitoring (spot checks), periodic audit, and management review at least every three years.
13. The accountable person **must** appoint Sanctioning Officers and **must** be satisfied that Sanctioning Officers are competent, with sufficient knowledge and experience of the task, hazards and potential risks involved with the activity to evaluate and sanction the PTW on their behalf.
14. The accountable person **must** make sure that Sanctioning Officers are formally appointed in writing (either by themselves as the accountable person or by the MMO if applicable) or hold a letter of authority or Terms of Reference (TORs) defining the types of Permits to Work they are authorised to sanction. For MMO appointed Sanctioning Officers, or equivalent roles (such as Authorised Persons), the accountable person may rely on assurance provided by DIO (for example through Authorising Engineer audits for JSP 375 Volume 3 disciplines).
15. The accountable person **must** put in place a system to make sure that, at any given time, there is clear and unambiguous control over the authorisation of PTWs within their area of responsibility (for example not PTWs issued by MMO/Contractors).
- Note:** This chapter will use the term Sanctioning Officer throughout which is inclusive of other terms that may be used by MMOs for the equivalent role.
16. The accountable person **must** set and communicate record-retention controls: permits retained at point of control for at least 30 days before archiving for not less than three years.

Policy Statement 2

The Sanctioning Officer **must** be competent to undertake the role to which they have been formally appointed, they are the only person with the delegated authority to issue or withdraw a Permit to Work. The Permit to Work **must** be signed by the Sanctioning Officer to provide authorisation for the work to proceed and when the work has been completed.

17. The Sanctioning Officer **must** be a competent person and have the authority to take action (for example refuse to issue, withdraw, or close a PTW) as necessary.
18. Before issuing a PTW, the Sanctioning Officer **must** be satisfied that risk assessments and Safe Systems of Work and so on have been developed and all necessary precautions have been taken, and in conjunction with the manager, that any work activities that may interact are identified and de-conflicted.
19. Before issuing a Permit to Work, the Sanctioning Officer **must** identify any other activities or live Permits to Work that may interact with, or affect, the safe execution of the task (including emergency arrangements such as rescue plans).
20. Where interacting activities or permits are identified, the Sanctioning Officer **must** make sure they are suitably de-conflicted, coordinated, or restricted so that the control measures and emergency arrangements of each Permit to Work remain effective for the duration of the work.
21. Any necessary restrictions, coordination measures, or cross-references **must** be clearly recorded on the Permit to Work and, where applicable, on all related permits.
22. A PTW will only be valid once signed by the Sanctioning Officer who **must** give their authority to proceed. The PTW **must** be signed off by the Sanctioning Officer once the activity has been completed or work ceased.
23. All PTWs **must** be recorded on a PTW register (for example the [MOD Form 5072](#)) or similar control system that includes at least the same information as a MOD Form 5072 prior to issue and on closing.
24. The Sanctioning Officer is the only person who is authorised to sign a PTW for authority to proceed and then complete the relevant Sanctioning Officer's Declaration (on a [MOD Form 5071](#)). The Sanctioning Officer **must** periodically monitor PTW tasks to ensure that the conditions of PTWs are complied with.
25. If notified that the task / activity requiring a PTW is not completed within the specified working time, or cancelled for any other reason, the Sanctioning Officer **must** inspect the work area to make sure that it has been made safe.
26. Where work or activity requiring a PTW has had to stop before it has been fully completed, a new permit **must** be raised and authorised by the Sanctioning Officer for the task to restart.
27. The original signed copy (working copy) of the PTW **must** be issued to the Person in Charge (PiC) and a copy retained by the Sanctioning Officer for the duration of the task. Upon completion of the task the original (working copy) **must** be returned to the Sanctioning Officer who should complete and sign off the PTW.

28. The Sanctioning Officer **must**, under no circumstances, be the same person to carry out the duties of the PiC of the task / activity.

29. Given the high-risk nature of environments and activities requiring a PTW, if anyone involved in the task is under 18, disabled, or a new or expectant mother, the Sanctioning Officer **must** give additional consideration before authorising the PTW, including but not limited to refusing the permit, requiring a change of personnel or the implementation of further control measures.

30. The Sanctioning Officer **must**:

- a. not issue a permit to themselves; high-hazard work must be countersigned by a second competent permit authoriser;
- b. conduct site checks at the start and completion of tasks, with interim checks proportional to hazard and complexity;
- c. make sure copies of all live permits are displayed at the worksite and centrally in a suitable location;
- d. control suspended permits, record plant status, retain suspended permits on the PTW system, and re-validate or re-issue before restart;
- e. manage interactions and shared isolations through cross-referencing and coordination;
- f. implement formal shift handover for live permits, with the incoming authority signing continuation;
- g. make sure the permit form (if not using MOD Form 5071) includes all essential elements: identification, scope, hazards, isolations, PPE/RPE, emergency actions, acceptance, extension/hand-over, hand-back and cancellation; and
- h. make sure where electronic PTW systems are used to include authentication, no remote issue without site visit, immutable change logs, printed site copies, and outage fallback.

Policy Statement 3

Commanders and managers **must** make sure that any task requiring a Permit to Work is suitably and sufficiently risk assessed, with an identified Person in Charge assigned to supervise the task.

31. The commander or manager (the person(s) managing the task) **must** make sure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been undertaken by a competent person prior to requesting a PTW. The risk assessment **must** be completed in accordance with [Chapter 8](#) (Safety risk assessment and safe systems of work) of JSP 375, Volume 1.

32. Once a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been raised, an effective Safe System of Work / method statement for the task that requires a PTW **must** also be drafted by a competent person (seeking specialist advice if necessary).

33. The commander or manager **must** consider whether other planned or ongoing activities could interact with a task requiring a Permit to Work and make sure this is addressed through planning, risk assessment and coordination with the Sanctioning Officer.

34. The commander or manager **must** make sure that when a task requires a PTW, they have identified a named PiC on it.
35. The risk assessment or Safe System of Work for the task / activity requiring a PTW **must**, where applicable, include how any tools, plant, equipment and the area will be made safe on the successful completion of the work.
36. The commander or manager **must**;
- a. integrate PTW early into planning and risk assessment, rejecting or redefining tasks where hazards cannot be reduced to ALARP.
 - b. plan for simultaneous operations so interacting tasks are safely coordinated or sequenced.
 - c. make sure all personnel / contractors directly involved with the task are competent in and briefed on the PTW system, with training and competence records maintained where applicable.
 - d. make sure that all personnel / contractors who are directly involved in the PTW fully understand the PTW, all relevant safety signage, and instructions related to the working area / task, this may include consideration where the personnel / contractors do not speak English as their first language.

Policy Statement 4

An identified, competent Person in Charge **must** be assigned to supervise the task requiring a Permit to Work.

37. The PTW **must** be issued to the PiC of the work, who **must** be competent, understand and agree to the conditions of the permit.
38. The PiC **must** brief all personnel directly affected by the activities of the PTW, to make sure they are aware of, and understand the hazards and control measures, are subsequently kept informed of any changes of the task, and that effective communication is maintained throughout, including during briefings, task / activity execution and handovers.
39. The PiC **must** make sure that all briefings, instructions and safety communications are understood by those involved in the task, including the use of appropriate alternative methods where verbal communication may not be effective.
40. The PiC **must** supervise the task or activity and accept responsibility for making sure compliance with the requirements of the PTW by signing the PTW declaration.
41. The PiC is responsible for directly controlling the task as detailed on the PTW and **must** always be present at the location where the task is being carried out and able to provide close supervision for the duration of that activity.
42. If the PiC is required to leave the task where the PTW is applicable, the task **must** be stopped, and the area made safe until they return, at which point the task may only recommence under the PiC's direct supervision.

43. The PiC **must** make sure that they are fully conversant with, and able to guarantee adherence with the conditions set out in the PTW and all documentation associated with the task; that the PTW is displayed at the point of work; and that all personnel involved in the activity / task are fully briefed, competent and adequately trained.

44. Each PiC **must** make sure that any additional actions required by the PTW are in place, including additional emergency arrangements and that all necessary safety and emergency equipment is available, suitable and safe for use before commencing the task and that only the task detailed on the PTW is carried out.

45. If the conditions of the PTW cannot be met, work **must** stop immediately and if safe to do so, all tools, plant and equipment and the area made safe and all personnel withdrawn.

46. If the task is not completed within the specified times or cancelled for any other reason, the PiC **must** make sure that all tools, plant and equipment and the area is made safe, and formally notify the Sanctioning Officer that the task / activity in the PTW was not completed.

47. Where a task / activity requiring a PTW has been stopped prior to completion (as outlined above), a new permit **must** be raised and issued for the continuance of the task.

48. The PiC **must** make sure the PTW is displayed at the point of work and that changes, suspensions or handovers are immediately communicated.

49. The PiC **must** only confirm successful PTW closure when they are satisfied the plant and / or equipment is left in a safe condition and all persons, tools and controls are accounted for.

Policy Statement 5

All personnel involved in the Permit to Work **must** comply with all information, instruction and training, including Safe Systems of Work and / or method statements.

50. All personnel involved in the PTW **must** comply with all:

- a. information provided in the PTW, risk assessment and any Safe Systems of Work / method statements;
- b. instruction from any Safe Systems of Work, method statements and / or briefing's from the PiC of the task / activity;
- c. training provided in order to competently carry out the task / activity related to the PTW; and
- d. Safe Systems of Work, as required by management and in accordance with the requirements of any PTW.

51. All personnel involved in the PTW **must** use agreed communication methods during the task / activity, and raise concerns where communication is unclear or ineffective.

52. Personnel **must**, when safe to do so, inform the commander, manager or PiC of any defective control measures, or control measures that are not in place during the task involved in the PTW.

53. All personnel **must** stop work, if safe to do so, and seek instruction immediately if in doubt of any measures within the PTW, safe systems of work, control measures, if permit conditions cannot be met, or if conditions change.
54. All personnel **must** complete any required PTW training and comply with all briefings and controls.

Part 2: Guidance

This part provides the guidance and good practice that **should** be followed to help you comply with this policy.

Authorisation and Oversight

Policy Statement 1

The accountable person **must** make sure that, where necessary, Permit to Work procedures under their area of responsibility are in place and Sanctioning Officers are formally appointed to evaluate and sanction Permits to Work on their behalf.

1. The types of high-risk or non-routine work that **should** be considered for Permits to Work (PTW) include but are not limited to:
 - a. Work in confined spaces;
 - b. Hot work such as welding, cutting or grinding;
 - c. Vessel entry including water tanks or other enclosed areas;
 - d. Cutting into pipework carrying hazardous substances;
 - e. Mechanical lifting operations such as crane or cherry picker use;
 - f. Work that requires electrical or mechanical isolation.

Note: Further guidance on the kind of work that should be considered for PTWs can be found in [HSG 250 – Guidance on permit-to-work systems](#).

2. The accountable person **should** include details of any Sanctioning Officers in their Organisation and Arrangement Statement for their area of responsibility.

Policy Statement 2

The Sanctioning Officer **must** be competent to undertake the role to which they have been formally appointed, they are the only person with the delegated authority to issue or withdraw a Permit to Work. The Permit to Work **must** be signed by the Sanctioning Officer to provide authorisation for the work to proceed and when the work has been completed.

3. The Sanctioning Officer **should** conduct regular inspections of the tasks and activities that they have sanctioned through PTWs.
4. The Sanctioning Officer **should** provide regular updates and training to relevant personnel on their local PTW system, including detail in this policy chapter; anything specific from their Defence Organisation and any local policies that are in place.

Risk Control

Policy Statement 3

Commanders and managers **must** make sure that any task requiring a Permit to Work is suitably and sufficiently risk assessed, with an identified Person in Charge assigned to supervise the task.

5. Commanders and managers **should** make sure that all control measures have been implemented so that when the PTW is issued, the Sanctioning Officer, Person in Charge and all involved in the task are confident that the risks are As Low As is Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) and acceptable for the work to commence on the designated task, area or plant for the time specified.
6. The commander or manager **should** consider the usability of Permit to Work documentation (MOD Form 5071), including layout, clarity and readability, to minimise the risk of error when completing or reviewing permits, particularly in high-risk or time-pressured environments.
7. The commander or manager **should** consider whether communication methods used in the PTW process (including briefings, alarms and handovers) are suitable for the working environment and personnel involved, and include visual or written alternatives where appropriate.
8. If there are areas or activities that require a PTW in the commander or manager's area of responsibility, this **should** be included on any regular health and safety workplace inspection activity.
9. If there is an area or activity within the commander or manager's area of responsibility that requires a PTW, it **must** have appropriate signage to indicate this and **should** include details of the relevant Sanctioning Officer.

Policy Statement 4

An identified, competent Person in Charge **must** be assigned to supervise the task requiring a Permit to Work.

10. The Person in Charge (PiC) **should** be named on the risk assessment or Safe System of Work for the task / activity requiring a PTW.
11. The PiC **should** be involved in the production of the risk assessment and any safe systems of work for the task requiring a PTW.
12. The PiC **should** be aware of all personnel who will be conducting the task detailed in the PTW.

Policy Statement 5

All personnel involved in the Permit to Work **must** comply with all information, instruction and training, including Safe Systems of Work and / or method statements.

13. Personnel involved in the PTW **should** make the commander, manager or PiC aware of any physical or medical condition that could affect the findings of the risk assessment and their ability to undertake the activity safely so that appropriate corrective action can be taken.

14. All personnel involved in the task requiring a PTW **should** be aware of who the PiC is and how to contact them before and during the task taking place.

Retention of Records

15. All records must be kept in accordance with [Chapter 39](#) (Retention of Records) of JSP 375, Volume 1.

Related Documents

16. The following documents should be consulted in conjunction with this chapter:

a. [JSP 375, Volume 1](#):

- (1) Chapter 4 – Workplace Inspections;
- (2) Chapter 6 – Safety Signs;
- (3) Chapter 8 – Safety Risk Assessment and Safe Systems of Work;
- (4) Chapter 9 – Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations;
- (5) Chapter 15 – Personal Protective Equipment (including RPE);
- (6) Chapter 19 – Young Persons;
- (7) Chapter 20 – New and Expectant Mothers;
- (8) Chapter 28 – Confined Spaces;
- (9) Chapter 31 – Hot Working;
- (10) Chapter 33 – Maintenance, Construction and Excavation;
- (11) Chapter 34 – 4Cs System – Management of Visiting Workers / Contractors; and
- (12) Chapter 39 – Retention of Records.

b. Other MOD Publications;

- (1) [JSP 375, Volume 3](#).

c. Legislation and guidance;

- (1) [HSG 250 – Guidance on permit-to-work systems](#); and
- (2) [HSE – Permit to work systems](#).