

Northern Ireland Audit Office

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

December 2009

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

1. General Office Policy

1.1 It is the policy of the NIAO to comply fully with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and all other relevant and subsidiary legislation. This entails ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and of others who may be affected by its operations. In addition, there is a duty to ensure that the discharge of these responsibilities shall be an integral part of the duties and objectives of the NIAO.

1.2 It is the responsibility of the NIAO to ensure that management at all levels implements the policy, so far as it is reasonably practicable, by ensuring the provision and maintenance of:

- a safe and healthy working environment and systems of work and a safe means of access to and egress from any place of work;
- plant, structures and equipment that are safe and without risks to health;
- such information, instruction, supervision and training as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of all employees and others on the premises at 106 University Street;
- protective clothing and equipment if necessary;
- adequate welfare facilities at work;
- arrangements for covering the absence of personnel with key safety functions;
- such safeguards as are necessary for the protection of the general public and others visiting 106 University Street;
- arrangements to ensure that the above standards are maintained and that appropriate corrective action is taken as a result of reports, suggestions and information received; and
- appropriate standards in relation to health and safety in accommodation provided by audited bodies for use of NIAO staff.

2. Organisation

- 2.1 It is the policy of NIAO to maintain a safe and healthy working environment for all its officers, so far as is reasonably practicable. Individual officers have specific responsibilities for various tasks and these are outlined in the paragraphs below.
- 2.1.1 The **Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)**, as head of the Office, has overall responsibility for the health and safety at work of all officers employed in the Office and has the power to take disciplinary action against any officer who shows wilful disregard for safe working practices.
- 2.1.2 The **AAG of Division A** is responsible to the C&AG for the health and safety at work of all officers employed in the Office.
- 2.1.3 The **Personnel Officer** is responsible to the AAG, Division A for health and safety policy matters.
- 2.1.4 The **Health and Safety Officer** is responsible to the AAG, Division A for providing health and safety advice to the AAG, Division A, the Personnel Officer and staff.
- 2.1.5 The **Premises Officer** is responsible to the AAG, Division A for all day-to-day matters in respect of the health, safety (including evacuation procedures) and welfare of all NIAO staff working at 106 University Street and all visitors to the building. In particular, the Premises Officer is responsible for ensuring that accommodation and facilities at 106 University Street are routinely inspected and maintained in a good state of repair and that inspections and repairs are adequately documented.
- 2.1.6 Each member of the **Directorate** has a responsibility for the health and safety at work of all officers in their charge.
- 2.1.7 Each **Audit Manager** is responsible to the relevant member of the Directorate for all matters in respect of health, safety and welfare at work of all persons employed in the Branch and for ensuring that:
- adequate information, instruction, training and supervision are provided as necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of all staff in the Branch and that staff attend all relevant training seminars arranged by the Health and Safety Officer;

- accommodation provided for the Branch is suitable and that it is maintained to an acceptable standard, with any defects notified promptly to the Premises Officer for corrective action to be taken;
 - equipment, plant and appliances used by the Branch comply with statutory requirements and are provided and maintained to an acceptable standard, with any defects notified promptly to the Premises Officer for corrective action to be taken;
 - all fire precautions are observed; and
 - accidents and incidents ('near misses') are reported to Central Services Branch, investigated and steps taken to prevent recurrence.
- 2.2 In the case of officers working outside 106 University Street, the senior ranked officer present at any time is responsible to his or her Audit Manager for the implementation of NIAO policy in respect of the health and safety at work of all NIAO staff working in that office at that time. He/she is also responsible for ensuring that NIAO staff comply with any health and safety regulations in force in the accommodation being used.
- 2.3 It is the responsibility of management at each level to arrange cover for the absence of personnel with key safety functions (eg. floor evacuation officers).

3. **NIAO Health and Safety Officer**

- 3.1 NIAO Health and Safety Officer is responsible for considering and advising whether the NIAO Policy Statement on Health and Safety at Work, and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out that policy, fulfil the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations in force at any time.
- 3.2 Duties of the Health and Safety Officer include:
- giving general advice to all NIAO staff about health and safety matters;
 - safeguarding the arrangements for the health and safety at work of all NIAO staff and visitors, as far as is reasonably practicable;
 - notifying Contractors of any health and safety hazards which may exist or arise at its premises or place of delivery of the Services and which may affect the Contractor and shall advise the Contractor in connection with any necessary associated safety measures. The Contractor shall draw these

hazards to the attention of its Staff and shall instruct such persons in connection with any necessary associated safety measures;

- ensuring that routine inspection and maintenance of offices at 106 University Street is conducted by the Premises Officer;
- arranging awareness courses, seminars and meetings as appropriate on health and safety at work in order to assist staff to carry out their duties and obligations under the legislation;
- advising on the provision, where necessary, of suitable protective clothing or equipment;
- ensuring that all accidents are investigated, documented and reported fully by responsible officers;
- monitoring the issue and updating of any codes of practice, safety instructions and hazard warnings issued to staff;
- arranging consultation with Trade Union side on health and safety matters as appropriate;
- arranging regular review and, when necessary, revision of NIAO policy on health and safety matters; and
- liaison as necessary with HSOs in buildings where NIAO staff are outstationed in order to ensure that satisfactory working conditions are provided.

4. NIAO Health and Safety Committee

- 4.1 A Health and Safety Committee has been established under the Chairmanship of the AAG – Division A and comprises the Personnel Officer, the Premises Officer, HSO and Health and Safety Representatives nominated by TU Side. Staff are encouraged to bring health and safety matters to the attention of these individuals, whose names are posted on the Main Notice board on the Ground Floor.

5. Duties of Employees

- 5.1 Article 8 of the 1978 Order lays certain duties upon employees in relation to health and safety at work. For their own safety and that of others, NIAO staff must comply fully with the duties laid upon them by Article 8 of the Order and with the provisions of Article 9.

5.2 Article 8 states that it shall be the duty of every employee while at work:

- to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself/herself and of other persons who may be affected by his or her acts of omissions at work; and
- as regards any duty or requirement imposed on the employer or any other person by or under any of the relevant statutory provisions, to co-operate with him/her so far as is necessary to enable that duty or requirement to be performed or complied with.

5.3 Article 9 states that no person shall intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare in pursuance of any of the relevant statutory provisions. This in effect means that each employee shall:

- co-operate with the Office to enable it to fulfil its statutory duties;
- comply with the safety instructions and directions laid down by the Office;
- refrain from misuse of or interference with anything provided in the interest of health, safety and welfare and any action that might endanger himself/herself or others;
- in the case of an employee in authority, ensure that all necessary safety precautions are taken and that the necessary safety instructions are given;
- report, as prescribed in Appendix 1 Para 3.1, to his/her line manager and the HSO any defects in accommodation, plant, structures, equipment or safety procedures which come to his/her notice and
- report, as prescribed in Appendix 1 Para 3.1, to his/her line manager, the Premises Officer and the HSO any incidents which have led or might lead to injury or damage and shall co-operate with any investigation which may be undertaken with the objective of preventing accidents or their recurrence.

SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS

1. Maintenance and Safety Inspections

- 1.1 NIAO has a contract with DFP Construction Service (Estate Maintenance Division) to provide a maintenance service for the building. Under this contract, routine maintenance and safety inspections of the building and its contents (eg inspections to fire safety and other equipment (eg lifts) along with portable appliance testing) are conducted on a regular, scheduled basis.
- 1.2 Responsibility for liaison with the Construction Service on all aspects of the maintenance and safety of the building and any equipment contained therein rests with the Premises Officer. In the absence of the Premises Officer, the Deputy Premises Officer deals with these matters.

2. Fire Safety

- 2.1 The emergency procedures to be applied in case of fire and evacuation are contained in PPC 05 /08.
- 2.2 Practice evacuations will be held periodically and no less frequently than once a year. Drills will be planned and organised by the Premises Officer. Practice tests of the public address systems and fire alarm bells will be conducted at least once a week.

3. Reporting of Accidents, Incidents and Hazards

- 3.1 All accidents, incidents (near misses) and potential hazards to health and safety should be reported to line management and the Premises Officer or Deputy Premises Officer. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to report accidents, incidents and hazards, both verbally and in writing, to CSB as soon as they occur. All reports will be documented as appropriate by CSB (eg, using the Accident Book) and corrective action instigated by the Premises Officer, where necessary.

4. Outstations

- 4.1 For responsibilities at outstations see paragraph 2.2 of the Health & Safety Policy document.

5. **Information and Training**

5.1 A Health and Safety legislation poster is located on the ground floor notice board.

5.2 Health and Safety Training is carried out periodically.

6. **Risk Assessments**

6.1 Risk assessments have been carried out and will be monitored and updated regularly.

7. **Personnel**

7.1 Currently the following job titles are held by;

AAG Div A	-	Janet Sides
Personnel Officer	-	Calwell Steele
Health & Safety Officer	-	Anne Russell
Premises Officer	-	Kate Cassidy
Deputy Premises Officer	-	Gina O'Sullivan