

Safety Officers (SO) Annual Report for 2016

Context

This report will, in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy Part III - Governance Arrangements, be submitted to the Health & Safety Committee, Strategic Leadership Team and Local Joint Committee in the spring of 2017.

The purpose of the report is to provide evidence that health and safety performance is satisfactory and continuously improving.

The report includes

- An overall appraisal of health and safety performance for the PDNPA for the previous year
- Reference to improving competencies, particularly through training including: 'How We Work Around Here' – Line Manager Briefings and a series of workshops for Field Services
- Accident and incident data and analysis for the year ending December 2016 for staff and visitors
- A report on services provided to other National Parks and other third parties
- Recommendations for further action through 2017

Health & Safety performance

The day-to-day routine management of health and safety matters is observed and judged by the SO during a continuous, rolling programme of visits to premises and staff 'at work'. During these visits opportunities arise to recognise and endorse good practice, respond to instances where some improvements are necessary and to further coach staff, enhancing their competence, understanding and use of resources and risk management techniques including, in particular, risks assessment.

Workplace visits typically take account of

- Safety related documentation. Good documentation is an essential component part of a safety management system. Use of and compliance with these documented systems is key to our overall success in implementing, maintaining and demonstrating good safety management. Key documents include: safety policies and associated procedures, safe working method statements and risk assessments, incident reports/records and follow-up/action reports. The SO continues to review and update existing and develop new, safety related documents. These documents, including many risk assessments and core Safety Policy are becoming more consistent across all NPAs allowing much more efficient and timely review, replacement and referral.

- Physical conditions and work activities – including: work space/light/noise/temperature/humidity/ventilation, access and egress, building conditions, work equipment, the use of PPE (personal protective equipment), workstations and waste disposal.
- Risk assessments – an improvement in the completion, use and review of risk assessments continues to build for a wide range of matters. The process of risk assessment review has driven an improvement in the understanding of risk for matters such as the use of work equipment and better familiarity with key control measures. Replacement of older risk assessments continues, ensuring that these assessments are current, valid and relevant. The SO will continue to focus on risk assessments and their improvement, as the key component in managing routine safety matters and for providing evidence that safety is being properly considered and well managed.
- Resources and competencies – closely allied to the production and use of risk assessments is the understanding and use of these resources. Through further training and collaboration, familiarity, confidence and an appreciation of the value of good risk assessments is continually improving. We can be confident that this will lead to enhanced and more reliable adherence to essential controls described within these key documents.

Independent Internal Audit report

A retrospective audit of PDNPA Health and Safety procedures was included in the Internal Audit Plan for 2016/17. The overall conclusion of this independent audit found that arrangements for managing risk were very good and that an effective control environment was in operation. The overall audit opinion was that **High Assurance** was given. This is the highest possible assessment of our health and safety procedures available to the auditors.

The risk/action ‘escalator’

Where a serious health or safety related matter is identified that requires ‘escalation’ to senior management for further investigation and/or action, this will be identified. There has, for 2016, been one such incident involving the use of one of our specialist Centaur vehicles, which overturned during a moorland fire-fighting operation. One member of staff and one trainee volunteer ranger were injured, both making a quick recovery. The incident was reportable under RIDDOR and an HSE investigation followed. This incident, the HSE investigation and wider repercussions are discussed further below.

Training, information and supervision

The provision of safety training and information continues to be a key function provided by the SO at all Parks advised. In 2016 significant developments include:

- A new Line Manager briefing module for Health and Safety, part of the 'How We Work Around Here' series of events. This module focused on key functions for Line managers in determining, assessing and improving: Awareness, Competence and Compliance. This laid important foundations for the introduction of a new Health and Safety Policy for 2017 based on the same three principles.
- Specific coaching/mentoring continues, for individuals, groups and teams needing to address safety matters that are particularly relevant to their own activities and responsibilities.
- During 2016 the SO has provided further support to other NPs including a review of the structure, role and performance of Health and Safety Committees (initiated at South Downs NPA).
- The Moors for the Future Team (MFF) continues to review and improve their safety management systems. Following organisational changes at MFF a further review of their processes for identifying priorities, improving staff involvement/compliance and reporting back to line management continues.

Health and Safety Policy for 2017

The PDNPA General Statement of Safety Policy for 2016 (and for many previous years) has now been replaced by a Health and Safety Policy.

The proposal for a new Health and Safety Policy was first introduced to HSC and SMT in the autumn of 2015. This was offered as a more straight-forward and contemporary document that promotes the importance of developing a positive safety culture through the principles of Awareness, Competence and Compliance. Following further actions to develop and support the new document through 2016, this work is now complete.

Accidents and incidents data and analysis 2016

Staff

The PDNPA, in common with other NPAs continues to enjoy a low accident rate. Causes of accidents are familiar and generally, only minor injuries have been experienced. These low numbers make any detailed analysis or comparison statistically difficult and therefore a simple analysis looking for more common circumstances of incidents and accidents is preferred.

It is encouraging that 4 near-misses were reported in 2016 (up from 3 in 2015, 1 in 2014 and none in the previous year). This is, perhaps, further evidence that the value and importance of near-miss reporting is being more widely accepted.

There is no identified significant increase in the number or pattern of minor incidents. Of 18 reported incidents 11 affected staff and 7 volunteers.

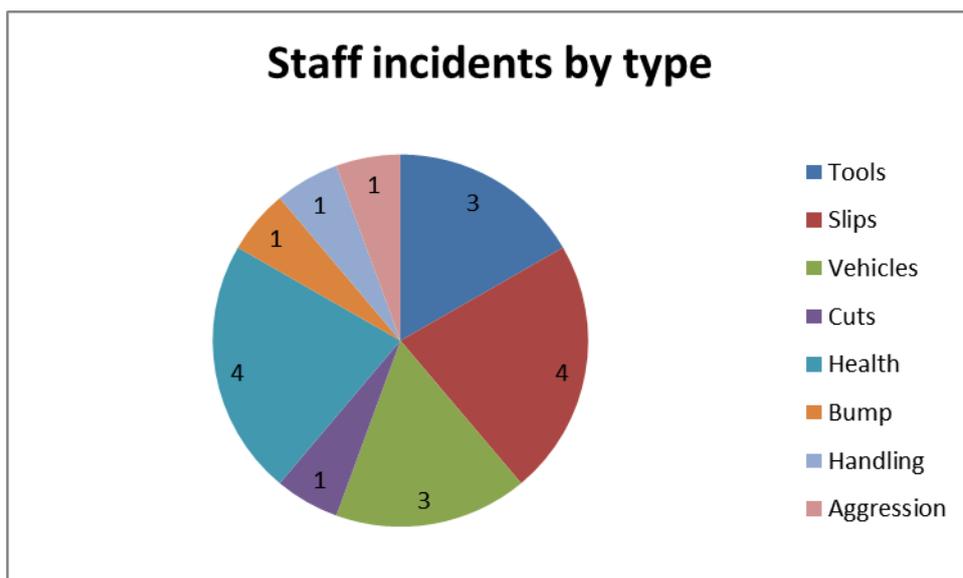


Fig. 1 Staff reported incidents by type of incident

The trend in the overall number of reported accidents over the previous 16 years remains favourable.

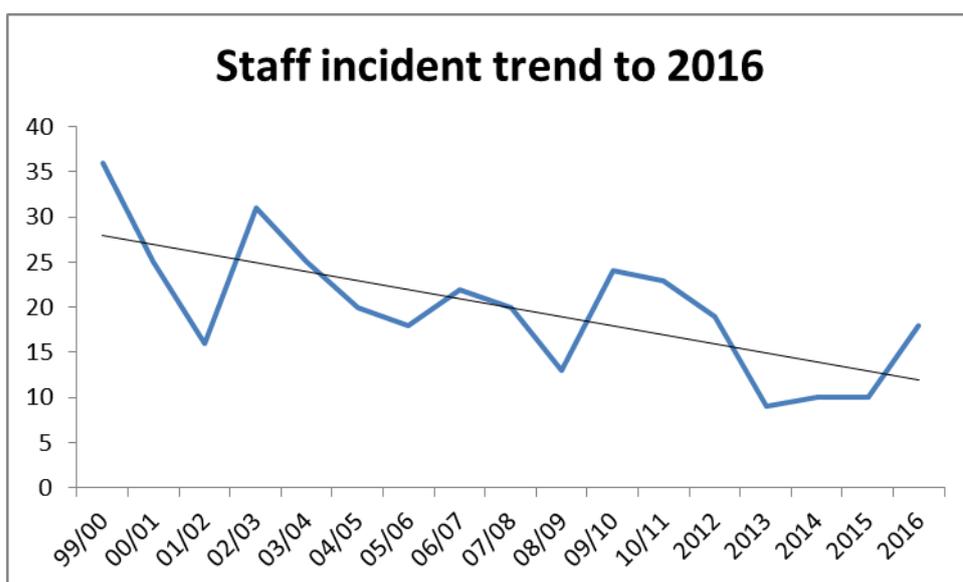


Fig. 2 Staff accident trend 1999-2016

Visitors

Twelve accidents to visitors were reported in 2016, up from seven in 2015 and 2014. This compares to fourteen in 2013 and eleven in 2012. As in previous years these incidents were most commonly slips, trips and falls (6), only one bicycle related accident was reported for 2016 a significant decrease from previous years. Eight of the incidents reported were for students on school visits. All of these incidents are investigated.

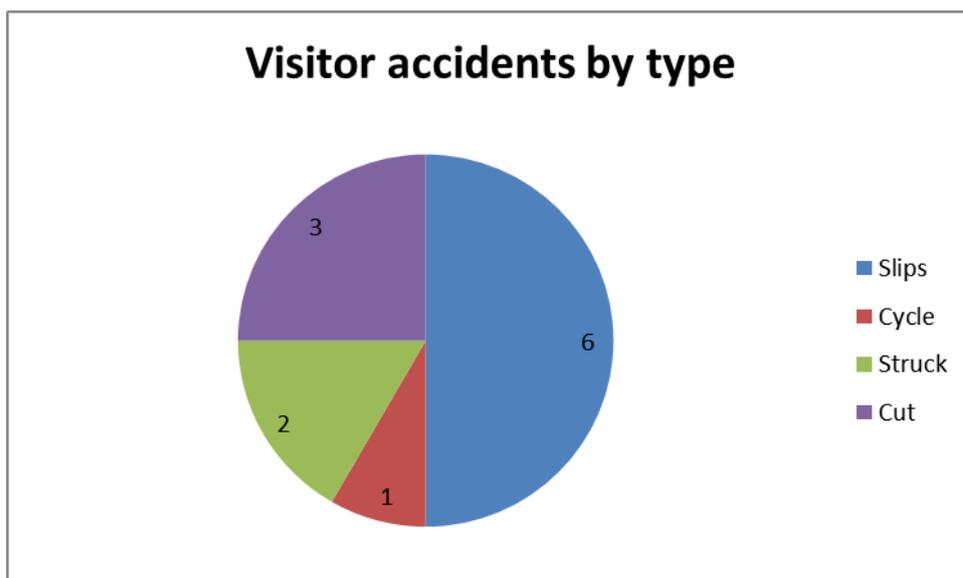


Fig. 3 Visitor accidents 2016

Centaur incident – 9th May 2016

While approaching a large moorland fire above the upper Derwent valley one of our Centaur specialist vehicles, driven by one of our Rangers and carrying one passenger, a Volunteer Ranger (Training) overturned harming both occupants. The injuries to our Volunteer Ranger were reportable under RIDDOR (the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) and HSE (Health & Safety Executive) was informed of the incident, on the same day, by the Safety Officer (SO).

Both injured persons made a quick recovery from their injuries and resumed their respective duties.

HSE chose to investigate the incident and attended the accident site on two occasions. At the second visit the Centaur was recovered from the accident site (by PDNPA staff), taken into possession by the HSE and removed to the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) at Buxton.

PDNPA staff has taken further action to ensure that a similar accident is less likely to happen and that all safety measures for all specialist vehicles are reviewed and where necessary improved.

Immediately following this incident a review of the use of all specialist vehicles was initiated by Area Managers (North and South). The purpose of this review: to see if any changes were necessary to current safeguards and safety procedures to ensure the safe use of all such vehicles. The review has looked at all aspects of specialist vehicle use including: the requirement for continued use of specific specialist vehicles; driver training and experience (for different situations of use); vehicle safety-checks, maintenance and repair; record keeping; and, safety documentation. While much of this work was completed quickly and most vehicles could continue to be used, some further work continues.

The Centaur vehicles have not been used since the incident and it is likely they will now be disposed of.

After a prolonged silence, in October 2016 HSE issued a Notice of Contravention (NoC) identifying certain technical breaches of health and safety legislation. These alleged breaches included:

1. Suitability of Vehicle for the terrain. Although the thorough investigations by HSL Buxton had confirmed that the vehicle was, in every respect, suitable and the fact that this is one of the most commonly used vehicles for this type of work, HSE did not consider that we had done a sufficient assessment of suitability.
2. Maintenance of work equipment. Records of maintenance for this vehicle were incomplete. Although maintenance record keeping is not a legal requirement, without suitable records it was difficult to demonstrate that maintenance was sufficient.
3. Training. Training records, a competency assessment and a detailed training syllabus were all available to the HSE investigation. However they alleged that the circumstances of the accident were a sufficient indication that training and competence were not adequate.

All of the matters raised by HSE had already been recognised by our internal investigation and had been or were being attended to. Confirmation of this was included in our response to HSE.

As HSE had been able to identify alleged contraventions PDNPA became liable for their costs recovery under Fee For Intervention (FFI) legislation. Subsequent to agreeing our response to the NoC a series of invoices were received. Queries were raised, as allowed under FFI, and while some costs were reduced, PDNPA remained liable for HSE investigation costs totalling £45,316.70. Most of this sum related to the investigations carried out by HSL at Buxton.

This sum has since been paid to HSE.

Efficiency/cost savings

The SO continues to provide professional advice to Northumberland and South Downs National Park Authorities through agreed Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The SLA with South Downs has been renewed to 2020. Further Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) audits have been carried out during 2016 for New Forest and Dartmoor NPAs. An additional SLA for a continuing relationship with Dartmoor is currently being finalised. The sharing of a professional OHS service by PDNPA with other members of the NP family is being written up as a case study by consultants exploring shared services opportunities for National Parks UK. By using a common OHS service not only are costs supported but problems and solutions are shared, common formats for policies, risk assessments and accident reporting are agreed and consistent training and guidance is provided.

Priorities and actions for 2017

The SO will continue to perform a rolling programme of workplace visits, audits and inspections and provide OHS advice to staff 'at work'.

Other specific priorities for 2017 include:

- Supporting the work of a project group set up in the Commercial Development and Outreach Directorate to complete work initiated by the Centaur incident.
- Exploring opportunities to expand the membership and develop the role and function of the Health and Safety Committee to enhance the OHS resources at PDNPA.
- Ensure that PDNPA is addressing priorities for OHS identified by the HSE for the public sector including: work-related stress and manual handling.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The high assurance of good risk management identified by our auditors and the work summarised in this report, delivering continuing improvements in overall OHS management at PDNPA, is recognised.
2. Proposals for continuing/further priorities and actions for 2017 are endorsed.

Jon Wayte
Safety Officer
May 2017