

## **Safety Officers (SO) Annual Report for 2014**

### **Context**

This report will, in accordance with the General Statement and general arrangements for safety management, be submitted to the Health & Safety Committee\*, Senior Management Team and Local Joint Committee in the Spring of 2015.

\*Due to staff absence the presentation of this report to the Health & Safety Committee will for 2014 follow the presentation to LJC.

The purpose of the report is to provide evidence that health and safety performance is satisfactory and continuously improving. Some good-practice examples initiated during 2014 are included.

The report includes

- An overall appraisal of health and safety performance for the PDNPA for the previous year
- Reference to improving competencies, particularly for specific risk assessment and risk management, through collaboration with individuals and teams and using support system developments
- Accident and incident data and analysis for the year ending December 2014 for staff and visitors
- An update on efficiency cost savings and performance improvement in the provision of safety services
- Recommendations for priority, performance enhancing activities, in 2015

### **Health & Safety performance**

The day-to-day routine management of health and safety matters is observed and judged by the SO during the 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. Matters addressed in 2014 include, use of workshop and portable equipment (e.g. woodworking machines), exposure to noise and vibration (HAVS) and precautions for Fire.
- 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 lone-working and better familiarity with key control measures. Replacement of older risk assessments continues ensuring that these assessments are current, valid and currently 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.

#### *Good practice example – Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)*

*The use of vibrating tools and equipment exposes users to a risk of developing HAVS, a serious ill-health effect for many people. While National Parks are not in the higher-risk category of industries for this risk, legislation requires us to have a suitable system in place to manage this risk. Systems in place for higher-risk industries are onerous and expensive to implement. Taking a practical and consistent approach for all NPs a simple ‘traffic-light’ system of categorising equipment and working practices allows the risk to be efficiently, 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.

It is anticipated that a continuous rolling programme of visits, audits and inspections will continue to be performed by the SO with a continuing focus on visiting staff ‘at work’.

#### **The risk/action ‘escalator’**

There have, for a further year, been no serious matters requiring escalation. This, perhaps, lends further evidence of the satisfactory and timely, routine line-management of occupational safety.

#### **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 2014 significant developments include:

- Briefing information, specifically for Members has been prepared and disseminated. This highlights Members responsibilities, as promulgated in

the Health & Safety Policy, with particular emphasis on receiving and ratifying evidence and assurances of good safety management

- A new Health & Safety event for Senior Managers has been delivered to all Heads of Service and SMT at Northumberland and South Downs National Parks. This event, designed to make managers consider safety management arrangements and individual responsibilities for this, utilises the current HSE, Plan, Do, Check, Act model. A tool for considering strategic level objectives and current levels of compliance to inform future priorities for improvement was also introduced. Follow-on work to agree and promulgate these objectives and associated action plans will be pursued with our partner Authorities through 2015.
- Specific coaching/mentoring continues, for individuals, groups and teams needing to address safety matters that are particularly relevant to their own activities and responsibilities.

#### *Good practice example – Risk assessment for Conservation Volunteers*

*In collaboration with the CV Managers a set of guidance and risk-assessments has been developed specifically for the instruction of and use by conservation volunteers working independently of any NP staff. This material has been shared with staff with similar needs at South Downs NP and with MFF staff designing similar working methods for volunteer surveyors.*

- During 2014 the SO has provided training events for other NPs focussing particularly on line-management competence and involvement. Those other Parks are now performing safety management at a similar level to that achieved by the PDNPA. Courses devised for particular groups at these other Authorities, including: Volunteer Rangers will later be used for follow-up training at the Peak District.
- The Moors for the Future Team (MFF) continues to review and improve their safety management processes. Risk assessment styles and content have been further developed for both construction related activities (CDM compliance) and for wider use. The SO has advised on these developments and incorporated the key improvements into wider NPA systems and processes.

#### **General Statement of Safety Policy 2015**

The PDNPA General Statement of Safety Policy for 2015 has been reviewed by the Health & Safety Committee and approved by LJC. The format and content of this key safety management policy is now consistent across all Parks advised by the SO. This allows more meaningful benchmarking of key safety management activities and simplifies future reviews.

The Staff survey for 2014 included feedback on well-being at work. This information was used to set-up two focus groups exploring these issues further. Subsequently a Staff Well-being at Work Policy has been developed using the HSE guidance on the topic. This Policy will be fully implemented during 2015.

## Accidents and incidents data and analysis 2014

### Staff

The PDNPA, in common with other NPAs continues to enjoy a very low accident rate. Causes of accidents are familiar, typically involving a number of slips, trips and falls and contact with sharp objects. No major injuries are reported for 2014. 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.

An analysis of the 2014 incidents suggested that a key area to continue focus on is work involving volunteers which account for one third of all reported staff incidents (4 out of 12).

There is no identified significant increase in the number or pattern of minor incidents.

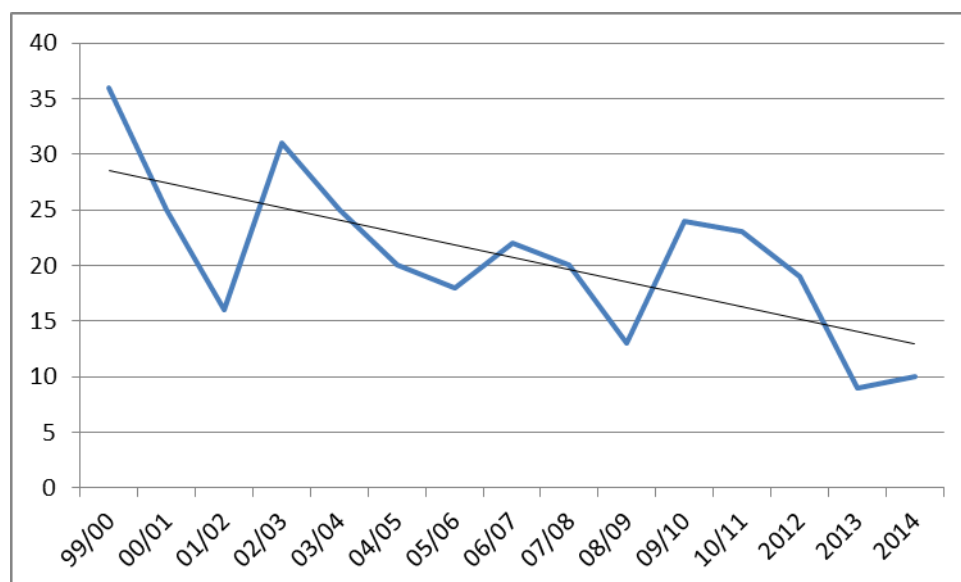


Fig. 1 Accident rate trend 1999-2014 (Staff accidents)

Staff incidents reported in 2014 include: one Road traffic accident, one incident of violence and aggression and one case of ill-health (non-work related). One near-miss was reported.

### Visitors

Seven accidents to visitors were reported in 2014. This compares to fourteen in the previous year and eleven in the twelve months before that. Of these three involved slips, trips and falls, two of which resulted in fractured wrists (both to 70 year-old ladies). Three accidents were associated with hired bicycle accidents. This compares to similar numbers in the three previous years (3 in 2013, 4 in 2012, and 4 in 2011).

### Efficiency/cost savings

The SO continues to provide advice to Northumberland and South Downs National Park Authorities. The SLA with Northumberland has been successfully renegotiated

to improve the profitability of this arrangement and to make it more consistent with the agreement with South Downs. These opportunities for sharing the costs associated with providing a professional health & safety advice service between several Authorities also realise a number of efficiency savings. Problems and solutions are shared, common formats for risk assessments and accident reporting are agreed and consistent control measures adopted. Information and data will also be more readily available for future benchmarking.

#### *Good practice examples – shared developments*

- *Developed at SDNPA and shared with others includes: lone-working for Planners*
- *Topics developed at other PDNPA and shared with others include: CDM Regulation compliance, HAVS management and Risk-Assessment and guidance for independent volunteers*

#### **Priorities and actions for 2015**

The SO will continue to perform an annual inspection programme, visiting all key premises and aiming to spend more of his time observing staff 'at work'.

Other specific priorities for 2015 are carried over from 2014 and include the full implementation of plans to improve important strategic H&S goals. This includes further development of management matters presented at senior managers training, such as:

- Appraisals of all senior managers, to include an assessment of their direct contribution to H&S performance
- Agreed competency levels are set for Members, managers and volunteers
- Participation in peer review/benchmarking exercises of key safety management activities including: accidents/incidents and near-misses
- A focus on occupational-health issues affecting NPA staff

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that continuing improvements in the overall safety management of PDNPA are recognised and those proposals for further priorities and actions, including the sharing of information and practice with other National Park Authorities are endorsed.

Jon Wayte  
Safety Officer  
June 2015