



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Corporate Health and Safety Policy

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1. Health and Safety Statement

- 1.1 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council recognises and accepts its responsibilities as an employer under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and associated Health and Safety Regulations. While this law is primarily concerned with the protection of our employees going about their work, it also applies where others may be affected by the way we do what we do, such as contractors working for us, members of the public visiting or using Council facilities, or our guests. In carrying out our day to day activities we will, therefore, strive to reduce the risk of injury and protect employees and others by assessing the possible risks and ensuring safe working practices are followed.
- 1.2 We also recognise that compliance with the law is a basic or minimum requirement. We want to go beyond the minimum requirements and so we aim to follow best practice in whatever we do.
- 1.3 Alongside our aim for higher standards of compliance, we will work towards continuous improvement in our health and safety performance. To help us do this we will set objectives and targets which are realistic and measurable so we can check on our performance.
- 1.4 The management of health and safety is regarded as a key part of what we do. This document describes our Health and Safety Management System. This System is based on the publication by the Health and Safety Executive Successful Health and Safety Management (HSG65). This Policy also sets out the responsibilities of all employees for health and safety in the workplace, and emphasises the additional roles that Directors, Heads of Service, Managers, Centre Managers, and Supervisors have in our Health and Safety Management System.
- 1.5 Our Health and Safety Policy is intended to contribute to our overall performance by:
 - reducing the occurrence of accidents, ill health, sickness absence, or other dangerous incidents;
 - promoting continuous improvements in health and safety performance;
 - encouraging all employees to think about how they can do their jobs more safely; and
 - improving the quality of services we deliver.

Success in these areas requires a real commitment to an improved health and safety culture from all employees.

- 1.6 We want to promote a positive health and safety culture, and we aim to achieve this by:

- establishing and maintaining **control** by setting clear health and safety objectives;
- securing **co-operation** between all levels of management, safety representatives, trade union members, and all other employees;
- maintaining effective systems of **communication** on health and safety matters;
- ensuring there is sufficient **competency** within the organisation in terms of health and safety support and advice, and that health and safety training is provided to all employees. Our Health and Safety Manager plays a key role in the provision of competent health and safety advice, and is available to provide advice and support to all, from senior managers through to those delivering front line services

1.7 A 6-monthly report on our Health and Safety performance will be produced by the Health and Safety Manager and brought to a meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee.

Signed.......... Date..... 21 July 2015.....
 Chief Executive

"Health and Safety is our number one priority. All employees are responsible for health and safety in the workplace. If you spot something that is not right then take action immediately by either reporting it to management or correcting it yourself if it is safe to do so."
Brendan Hegarty, Chief Executive

2. Organisation

Councillors

- 2.1 Councillors are accountable to the electorate for ensuring the Council meets its duties under The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978. They have overall responsibility for ensuring sufficient resources and funds are available to permit the Chief Executive and the Directors to comply with the Council's legal duties.
- 2.2 In practice they will delegate the day-to-day responsibility for managing health and safety and complying with the Council's legal duties to the Chief Executive.

Chief Executive

- 2.3 The Chief Executive is the final arbiter of what is contained in this document, and in relation to the structure and operation of the Council's Health and Safety Management System. Through consultation with Councillors, as appropriate, he will ensure that adequate resources are in place so that the Council can achieve what it sets out to do in this Policy.
- 2.4 Liaison with Directors and other senior managers will help ensure effective formulation, development and implementation of health and safety policy. To assist with this, the Chief Executive has arranged for the appointment of a competent person, namely the Health and Safety Manager, who is also available to advise senior managers, managers, supervisors and all other employees on health and safety matters.
- 2.5 The management of health and safety within each Department is devolved to individual Directors and/or Heads of Service as appropriate. Accountability to the Chief Executive for overall health and safety performance is achieved through the reporting arrangements described at paragraphs 3.10 & 3.11.
- 2.6 The Health and Safety Advisory Group (HSAG) is Chaired by the Chief Executive and meets twice yearly. It is attended by Directors, senior managers, supervisors, employee representatives, and the Health and Safety Manager and is responsible for the development, monitoring and review of our health and safety procedures. It will also ensure consistency of approach across Departments. Further details of the HSAG and of the Departmental Health and Safety sub-committee's are given in paragraph 3.11 and Appendices 1 and 2.

Directors/Heads of Service

- 2.7 Each Director will chair their own Departmental Health and Safety sub-committee which will meet twice yearly and align with meetings of the HSAG so that a suitable report of their proceedings can be brought to the corresponding HSAG meeting.
- 2.8 All senior managers are accountable to the Chief Executive for managing health and safety within their respective areas of responsibility. In particular, they should:

- i. Keep up to date with the health and safety arrangements and procedures set out in this Policy, and ensure that safe working practices are developed and implemented.
- ii. Demonstrate commitment to this Policy and promote a positive health and safety culture by:
 - setting a good example;
 - promoting good practice;
 - challenging poor perceptions or attitudes to health and safety;
 - encouraging people to identify problems before they result in accidents/incidents;
 - ensuring regular two way communication with employees about health and safety.
- iii. Implement this Policy, and adopt the Health and Safety Performance Standards referred to at paragraph 3.10 within their area of control, such as ensuring completion and review of risk assessments.
- iv. Allocate responsibilities for health and safety to their managers and supervisors so that they are clearly understood. Following on from this, and in liaison with Human Resources, incorporate these responsibilities within job descriptions.
- v. Hold individuals to account for their health and safety responsibilities, and see that corrective action is taken in the case of significant departure from accepted health and safety procedures.
- vi. Put in place procedures so that managers and supervisors can record risk assessments and document safe working practices. The arrangements to ensure risk assessments are regularly reviewed should be checked from time to time.
- vii. Ensure compliance with health and safety standards when planning new building projects, refurbishments, or maintenance work. Similarly, when purchasing equipment and substances ensure compliance with appropriate health and safety standards.
- viii. Provide employees with the necessary information, instruction and training to complete their tasks safely.
- ix. Ensure that those employees with specific responsibilities for health and safety, e.g. Centre Managers (see paragraph 2.10), are competent and receive training as necessary to enable them to perform effectively in their role.
- x. Actively monitor health and safety performance, for example, by including health and safety matters on the agendas of team meetings.
- xi. Make sure the Internal Accident/Incident Report form is completed and forwarded to the Health and Safety Manager for all accidents, incidents and near misses.
- xii. Ensure prompt investigations of all lost-time accidents, cases of work-related ill-health, near misses, or other significant incidents which in practice will usually be delegated to appropriate managers and/or supervisors.
- xiii. Ensure that all managers and supervisors carry out their role in the health and safety management system at a local level.
- xiv. Put in place arrangements so that employee safety representatives can be consulted on health and safety matters, and can carry out and report back on regular

inspections and any other activities specified in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations (NI) 1979 or the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (NI) 1996.

- xv. Ensure that the arrangements for exercising control over contractors, and the safety of our visitors, are in place and are effective.

Centre Managers

2.10 Centre Managers have specific health and safety responsibilities for the buildings they manage. In particular, they should:

- i. Keep up to date with their health and safety management responsibilities described within this Policy, and ensure compliance with all relevant health and safety standards, operating procedures, and industry-recognised best practice.
- ii. Act as the appointed Responsible Person, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Manager, for controlling risk from legionella bacteria in their buildings. In this role they will also need to keep available for inspection their legionella risk assessment including the schematic diagram for hot/cold water services in their building.
- iii. Ensure that the control measures identified in their legionella risk assessment for their building are carried out, and that records of action taken are kept.
- iv. Maintain a copy of the asbestos register for the building, and ensure that its contents are made known to both Council employees and contractors who may have to carry out work on the fabric of the building where such work has the potential to disturb any of the identified asbestos. This is to ensure that no one is inadvertently exposed to asbestos, and that if any disturbance of asbestos containing materials is unavoidable then exposure to asbestos is properly controlled.
- v. Liaise with contractors working on our premises, and confirm that their risk assessments are being followed. Carry out and document the monitoring and review processes described at paragraph 3.13.
- vi. Arrange for regular inspections of the building for which they are responsible to check that workplace health and safety standards are being maintained, and that safe working practices are in place.
- vii. Keep an up to date copy of their Fire Risk Assessment and Fire Safety Log Book available for inspection in the building, and ensure all fire safety arrangements described in both documents are maintained.
- viii. Ensure that plant and equipment is adequately maintained, including air conditioning systems and passenger carrying lifts. Maintenance arrangements will need to take into account safe means of access, for example, where air conditioning units are located external to the building such as on flat roofs. Note that passenger carrying lifts are subject to statutory 6-monthly safety examinations and that these are organised centrally for all Council premises. Centre managers should however arrange for a copy of their own lift examination report to be available for inspection in their building, and make arrangements for any remedial work identified in the report to be carried out.

- ix. Arrange for regular testing and maintenance of electrical equipment, and that the electrical installation throughout the building is maintained and subject to inspection by a competent person at appropriate intervals (i.e. annually for the main vehicle workshops and also for leisure centres with swimming pools, 3 yearly for other Council buildings open to the public, and 5 yearly for all other buildings).
- x. Make adequate provision for first aid.
- xi. Ensure that a copy of the Health and Safety Law Poster is displayed in an accessible location and the information on the poster kept up to date, and that all necessary safety signs are displayed properly.

Managers and Supervisors

- 2.11 Managers, including Centre Managers, and supervisors are accountable to their respective senior manager or line manager for ensuring this Policy is followed on a daily basis. In particular, they should:
- i. Produce risk assessments and document safe working practices, making sure employees know what is expected of them. Also, ensure risk assessments are revised at suitable intervals (e.g. annually or biennially as appropriate) or following changes to working practices or introduction of new processes and machinery.
 - ii. Assist senior managers in promoting a positive health and safety culture. Paragraph 2.8(ii) above gives examples of how this can be done.
 - iii. Arrange for regular health and safety inspections of their respective areas. The results of these inspections should be fed back to senior managers through their team meetings.
 - iv. Make sure that plant and equipment under their control can be used in a safe and proper manner.
 - v. Identify the health and safety training needs of employees and ensure that these needs are met in order that employees can carry out their duties competently.
 - vi. Routinely monitor any contractors at work on Council premises to ensure they are aware of and comply with our procedures. Contractors will normally be working on behalf of the Council following a selection or tendering process during which account will have been taken of their health and safety competence. The results of contractor monitoring are important because they can be used to help inform decisions on the suitability of a particular contractor for any future allocation of work.
 - vii. Consult with the Health and Safety Manager as necessary to assist when safe working practices are being devised for new procedures, or as a result of significant changes to existing procedures.
 - viii. Ensure that all necessary personal protective equipment is issued, used properly, maintained, and that documented records of issue are kept.
 - ix. Make records of all accidents, incidents and near misses and send completed Internal Accident and Incident Report forms to the Health and Safety Manager.

- x. Arrange for the investigation of all accidents, incidents and near misses as appropriate. This should include gathering first hand accounts of what happened as soon as possible after the event. The Health and Safety Manager will be available to assist with the investigation process.

Employees

2.12 Employees have an important role to play in achieving a healthy and safe work environment and maintaining and improving health and safety standards. Employees are required to:

- i. Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other persons, such as contractors and the general public, who may be affected by their work activity, and not to act in a way which could endanger the safety of others.
- ii. Co-operate with their manager or supervisor with regard to any requirement contained in this Policy.
- iii. Use machinery, equipment, vehicles, and substances, in accordance with training and instruction provided, and carry out any necessary safety checks before use.
- iv. Make proper use of anything provided for health and safety purposes, and not to intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse it. Only use equipment for which they have been trained and authorised to use.
- v. Draw the attention of managers or supervisors, without delay, to any near miss, unsafe condition, or item of plant or equipment which might present a serious danger to themselves or others.
- vi. Ensure they familiarise themselves with the requirements set out in risk assessments and follow the stated precautions. Follow all other instructions and safe working practices brought to their attention by their supervisor or manager.
- vii. Use the recommended items of personal protective equipment (PPE) properly, check if any item needs to be replaced through wear or damage, and where necessary request suitable replacement items of PPE.
- viii. Report all accidents, near misses, and work-related ill health to their manager or supervisor as soon as possible, and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.
- ix. Ensure they know where the first aid facilities are, and who the appointed first-aider is for their workplace.
- x. Attend health and safety training courses as required.
- xi. Make themselves aware of and participate in the fire evacuation procedure for their building and be aware of the position of fire exits, alarms and equipment. Those employees acting as Floor Marshals, for the purpose of fire drills, should familiarize themselves with the contents of the Fire Risk Assessment for their relevant building.
- xii. Ensure that escape routes and exits are not blocked.
- xiii. Inform their manager about any special medical or other condition which has developed and which may affect their work.
- xiv. Seek advice on health and safety responsibilities and best practice where necessary.

Health and Safety Manager

2.13 The Health and Safety Manager will:

- i. Provide advice and assistance to the Chief Executive and other senior managers on all health and safety matters.
- ii. Co-ordinate risk assessment activity across the Council. Assist managers and supervisors to investigate accidents, incidents and near misses, and make recommendations to help prevent recurrence.
- iii. Assist managers in establishing Health and Safety Performance Standards and procedures.
- iv. Prepare an annual Health and Safety Inspection Schedule covering all Council buildings, activities and practices, and carry out the listed inspections in a timely manner including the provision of reports to senior managers.
- v. Provide regular Health and Safety performance reports to the Senior Management Team.
- vi. Devise and run suitable health and safety initiatives from time to time for all employees (e.g. quarterly Health and Safety Weeks) with the aim of improving our health and safety culture.
- vii. Provide advice to all employees on health and safety matters.
- viii. Ensure up to date health and safety information is contained on the intranet, and on staff notice boards including the summary outcomes from health and safety initiatives.
- ix. Assist with the identification of health and safety training needs and co-ordinate appropriate training programmes in consultation with the Personnel Department.
- x. Liaise with the Health and Safety Executive (NI) as necessary.
- xi. Attend the Council's Health and Safety Advisory Group and Departmental Health and Safety sub-committee's, and contribute to the development of a positive health and safety culture.
- xii. Liaise with Council Officers responsible for insurance to assist with investigating or responding to claims received through the Council's Insurance Brokers.
- xiii. Actively promote this Policy and all Departmental Health and Safety documents.

3. Arrangements

3.1 All levels of management are responsible for ensuring that every procedure and activity is subject to risk assessment, and that safe working practices are developed accordingly. Proactive steps will be taken to avoid accidents, ill health and dangerous incidents paying particular attention to the provision and maintenance of:

- a safe place of work, including safe access to and from it;
- a healthy workplace;
- plant, equipment and safe working practices; and
- arrangements for the safe use, handling, and storage of substances hazardous to health.

Provision and maintenance of a healthy workplace will also include consideration of the need for health surveillance, for example, if employees are exposed to very noisy environments, or handle aggressive substances presenting a risk of dermatitis.

- 3.2 It is recognised that accidents, ill health and dangerous incidents may result from failures in control and are not necessarily the fault of an individual employee. All employees, however, are expected to accept their responsibility to work safely, adhere to safety procedures, use personal protective equipment provided, and generally contribute to safe working practices. All employees are encouraged to report any near misses, and any other hazards found.
- 3.3 We are committed to making sure that any work carried out on our behalf is done competently. Contractors working for us are therefore required to take into account not only the risks to the health and safety of their own employees, but also risks to our employees and others, such as our visitors. The arrangements individual contractors put in place to control risk while working on our behalf should include site specific safety plans, method statements, and risk assessments.
- 3.4 We will oversee, monitor, and review the activities of contractors and suppliers to ensure that risks present are properly controlled. Contractors and suppliers must co-operate with us to enable the requirements of our Policy to be met. The ways we will monitor contractors working for us are described at paragraph 3.12 & 3.13
- 3.5 This Policy has been put in place as a practical means of ensuring we meet our legal obligations. It also signals our response to the duty on us under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 to effectively manage workplace health and safety risks. It will be reviewed every two years and re-issued, and any documents referred to will also be subject to review at the same time. However, any review may be sooner if a significant failure or weakness is identified, or as a result of changes to health and safety law, or for any other reason the Council deems appropriate.

- 3.6 This Policy sets the tone for the commitment and leadership expected from all levels of management towards the effective management of our health and safety procedures. A copy will be made available to all employees and posted on the Council's Intranet.
- 3.7 Departmental Codes of Practice and Policies including Handbooks are intended to supplement this policy. These documents draw attention to the practical and detailed health and safety matters within the respective Departments that need to be managed in accordance with the principles set out in this Policy. These individual documents will be revised and re-issued as appropriate at the discretion of senior managers. In addition, a Health and Safety Handbook is available on the Council's intranet and is a source of reference for all on a wide range of health and safety topics.
- 3.8 Our approach to risk assessment, including guidance and example templates, is located in a number of separate documents. For ease of reference these documents appear together, forming a coherent procedure, on the Health and Safety page of the Council's Intranet.
- 3.9 Radon has been a subject of special interest to the HSENI in recent years and initiatives have been run to promote awareness of the risk. As a result of HSENI's initiative, and to reassure all employees, we have produced an assessment of this risk across all occupied Council buildings and this is documented in Appendix 3.
- 3.10 Health and Safety Performance Standards will be agreed by the Health and Safety Advisory Group each year, and will appear on the Health and Safety page of the intranet as a summary of Health and Safety Targets for that particular year. While the performance standards or targets can be expected to change to meet different needs, a constant theme will be a programme of health and safety inspections, to be carried out by the Health and Safety Manager, across all Council work activities for the coming year. Inspection reports will go to the relevant manager or supervisor for action and are copied to the appropriate Head of Service. In addition, these inspection reports are included in an overall monthly Health and Safety Performance Report from the Health and Safety Manager to the Senior Management Team.
- 3.11 Co-ordination of health and safety matters is provided through meetings of the Health and Safety Advisory Group, and through Departmental Health and Safety sub-committee meetings. These meetings are a means of formally consulting employees on health and safety matters, and safety representatives attend accordingly. The Departmental Health and Safety sub-committees report to the Health and Safety Advisory Group. The structures, roles and reporting arrangements of these meetings are described further in Appendices 1 and 2. Health and safety should also be a standing item on the agenda's of team meetings to help ensure consultation with employees also takes place at a local level.

Control of Contractors

- 3.12 The procedure for the effective control of contractors we engage is contained in guidance posted on the Health and Safety page of the Intranet (*Control of Contractors: Council Health & Safety Procedure*). It concentrates on work subject to the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations (NI) 2007 (i.e. CDM), but also explains the

requirements for routine monitoring and performance review of all contractors working on our behalf, usually on our premises, although this is not always the case.

- 3.13 Contractors doing work not subject to CDM are subject to a health and safety appraisal during our annual tendering process. Other contractors engaged for specific or 'one-off' jobs will also have their health and safety performance monitored, normally by the relevant Centre Manager or their staff. There is a simple one page form for this purpose Health and Safety Performance of Contractors at Appendix 6 of the guidance note, referred to in 3.12 above, to help with this process.

Accident/Incident reporting

- 3.14 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (NI) Regulations 1999 (RIDDOR) requires prompt notification to the Health and Safety Executive (NI) and completion of report Form NI2508 to be sent to HSE(NI) within 10 days. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for notifying and reporting to HSE (NI) and should be contacted without delay in the case of:

- fatalities and major injuries (including most fractures, severe electric shocks, and admissions to hospital for more than 24 hours);
- injuries resulting in more than 3 days off work;
- work-related ill-health; and
- dangerous occurrences.

For all accidents the Internal Accident and Incident Report Form should be completed and sent to the Health and Safety Manager as soon as possible. This form should also be completed for all other incidents and near misses and sent on to the Health and Safety Manager. Copies of the Internal Accident and Incident Report Form are available on the Health and Safety page of the Intranet.

Event Safety

- 3.15 Where the Council permits an event to take place on its premises, such as a concert, the Events Team will normally take lead responsibility for liaising with the Event Organiser and agreeing specific arrangements for the day or the duration of the event. In such cases the Event Organiser will be required to provide to the Events Team details of their Event Safety Plan, their risk assessments, and relevant insurances well in advance of the event. Where necessary the Events Team will consult with others, such as the Health and Safety Manager and Property Services to check that the information provided by the Event Organiser (e.g. risk assessments, insurances) is adequate, or that any necessary changes are made to allow the event to proceed safely.
- 3.16 The Events Team may also act as the Event Organiser for a themed event on Council property hosting a number of individual businesses such as stall holders, operators of amusements (e.g. bouncy castles), and fairground rides. In such cases the individual businesses will be required to provide details of their own risk assessments and relevant insurances, with the overall Event Safety Plan being the responsibility of the Events Team.

Failure to comply with the arrangements described above may result in disciplinary action and could ultimately lead to dismissal.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1

Health and Safety Advisory Group

1. This Group is established to facilitate consultation between senior managers and employee safety representatives on health and safety matters. It is also a forum for reviewing health and safety performance, for sharing information on health and safety across Council Departments, and for promoting a continually improving safety culture.
2. The Group will consider the following:
 - implementation of this Policy within the Council;
 - implications of legislation and guidance on health and safety matters for the Council;
 - trends in accidents and ill-health;
 - outcomes of safety inspections;
 - the most effective ways of promoting health and safety matters; and
 - the approach to improving health and safety in particular locations or within particular employee groups within the Council;
 - improving competence through health and safety training.
3. All members of the group are encouraged to raise items and reports on any of the matters at 2 above.
4. Without wishing to suppress the Group's right to discuss individual cases (especially if they highlight general problems or issues) it is acknowledged that such cases are usually better and more appropriately dealt with at the local level through the normal line management procedures.
5. The Group is entitled to consider any relevant health and safety matter. The Group will adopt a pro-active approach to improving the management of health and safety.
6. Membership of the Group shall be on the basis of nominated safety representatives and senior managers from across all four Departmental sub-committees.
7. There shall be ex-officio membership of the Group for the Council's Health and Safety Manager. The Group may co-opt other persons by agreement of both management and safety representatives.
8. The Chief Executive will Chair of the Group. The Vice-Chair shall be chosen from amongst the safety representatives.
9. For a meeting to conduct its business there should be at least two Directors and two safety representatives present. Minutes of meetings will be posted on both the intranet and on staff notice boards.

10. The Group will meet on agreed dates on at least two occasions each year. The Health and Safety Manager will include a report of the proceedings of the Group when reporting on overall health and safety performance to the Senior Management Team.

Departmental Health and Safety Sub-Committees.

1. Four Departmental sub-committees are established as follows:

- Corporate Services and Governance
- Regeneration and Planning
- Community Health and Leisure
- Environment and Place

These sub-committee's are intended to facilitate consultation between senior managers and employee safety representatives on health and safety matters as they affect the operation of their respective Departments. They are also an effective means of promoting and championing health and safety within each Department.

2. Each sub-committee will consider the following:

- implementation of this Policy and supplementary Departmental policies;
- examination of Departmental accident statistics, risk assessments and safety inspections;
- trends in accidents and ill-health;
- the most effective ways of promoting health and safety matters; and
- the approach to improving health and safety in particular locations or within particular employee groups within the Department.

3. All members of the group are encouraged to raise items and reports on any of the matters at 2 above.

4. Without wishing to suppress the sub-committee's right to discuss individual cases (especially if they highlight general problems or issues) it is acknowledged that such cases are usually better and more appropriately dealt with at the local level through normal line management procedures.

5. Each sub-committee is entitled to consider any health and safety matter arising out of or affecting any workplace within their Department. Each sub-committee will adopt a pro-active approach to improving the management of health and safety in their particular Department.

6. Membership of each sub-committee shall be on the basis of nominated safety representatives and senior managers from across the Department.

7. There shall be ex-officio membership of each sub-committee for the Council's Health and Safety Manager. Sub-committee's may co-opt other persons by agreement of both management and safety representatives.

8. Each sub-committee will be Chaired by the corresponding Departmental Director. The Vice-Chair shall be chosen from amongst the safety representatives.
9. For a meeting to conduct its business there should be at least two Heads of Service and two safety representatives present.
10. Each sub-committee will provide minutes of its meetings to the Health and Safety Advisory Group, and will meet on agreed dates ahead of the corresponding meeting of the HSAG.

Radon in the workplace

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas which is given off from many types of rock and soil. It can rise up through the ground and gather in buildings, although the likelihood of this happening in any particular building depends on the local geology.

The problem with radon is that it has no taste, smell or colour. Furthermore, it can be inhaled and once inside the lungs the radiation given off can, in extreme cases, lead to lung cancer.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has done a lot of work to establish and map Radon Affected Areas throughout Northern Ireland. The map they produced can be viewed at www.doeni.gov.uk/niea. Where buildings are within a Radon Affected Area there is an increased chance that radon may be a problem, and if so, that certain controls may be necessary to minimise the possible exposure of employees to radon. Controls usually involve improving the ventilation within a building, although in some cases it may be necessary to check how long employees spend in a particular area in order that they are not exposed to levels of radon above what is recommended.

The risk assessment process for all workplaces which are located in Radon Affected Areas may include measurements of radon levels. The first step in the risk assessment process is to determine if the workplace is within a Radon Affected Area. This can be done by accessing the website www.ukradon.org and running a postcode search for the particular building. So, for example, entering the Enniskillen Townhall postcode BT75 7BA, and paying the small fee charged for the search (£3.60), results in a Radon Risk Report which shows the Townhall is NOT in a Radon Affected Area. Alternatively, by checking the radon map of Northern Ireland it is clear that the Grange, Omagh is also not in a Radon Affected Area. It is also clear from the map that none of the Councils buildings, which are normally occupied by our staff, are located within Radon Affected Areas **with the exception of the Marble Arch Caves (MAC) in Fermanagh, and Lisnamallard House in Omagh.**

The MAC are within a Radon Affected Area and have been (and continue to be) subject to careful scrutiny by specialist radon consultants. An extensive report including radon measurements, and careful monitoring of the time each individual employee spends in the caves, is produced annually. No significant exposure of any of our employee's to radon has ever been found.

Elevated radon levels have also been detected in the basement office in Lisnamallard House. Remedial work was carried out to improve ventilation to the area, with follow-up monitoring to check the level was below the recommended threshold. There is an on-going requirement for radon monitoring and maintenance of the ventilation here.

The risk assessment for all Council buildings (with the exception of the MAC and Lisnamallard House) is that exposure to radon in them is not significant and no formal control measures are necessary.

