



Safer Ports Initiative Guide to Setting Up a Health and Safety Liaison Committee

1. Safer Ports Initiative

This document is one of a series produced in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Safer Ports Initiative (SPI) and provides a guide to good practice on the formulation of health and safety liaison committees (Liaison Committees) in the ports industry.

2. Introduction

Ports, no matter what their size, will involve a number of different employers undertaking a variety of different activities. The actions of one particular undertaking can have an effect on others, which highlights the need for co-operation and co-ordination as required by regulation 11 of the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*¹.

This general requirement is outlined, in a ports specific context, in HSE's Guidance publication *Managing Health and Safety in Dock Work (MHSDW)*². *Regulation 5 of the Docks Regulations 1988*³ requires dock operations to be planned and executed to prevent accidents; whilst encouraging collaboration between the different employers involved. The *Port Marine Safety Code*⁴ provides another framework for co-operation and consultation between employers.

One of the most effective ways of achieving good co-operation and co-ordination and achieving shared health and safety aims and objectives is through the formulation of a Liaison Committee.

3. Formulation

HSE's guidance in MHSDW states that "if your organisation is in overall control of the port, dock or terminal, as well as being responsible for the premises, you will have the right to control the use to which they are put. In addition if you are representing the organisation, offering the overall service of the facilities, you have a clear role in making sure those using and working in them co-operate with each other and do not endanger each other. This will require co-operation and co-ordination between all dock users, who will also have to satisfy themselves that the common arrangements are sufficient to meet their own legal duties. Regular meetings can play an important part in promoting good co-operation and co-ordination."

¹ Management of Health and Safety at Work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Approved Code of Practice and Guidance, L21, ISBN 0 7176 2488 9.

² Managing Health and Safety in Dock Work, HSG177, ISBN 0 7176 2020 4.

³ Safety in Docks, COP 25, ISBN 0 11 885456 9.

⁴ Port Marine Safety Code, DfT, 2000, ISBN 1 85112 365 2.

Having taken the decision to form a Liaison Committee, all employers involved in the Port's operations will need to be identified in order to decide on appropriate representation and in some cases how many Liaison Committees there should be. To facilitate this, it would be a good idea to hold a preliminary meeting with representatives from all the interested parties in the Port. A presentation of the Safer Ports Initiative at the Port may be an ideal opportunity to initiate the formulation of a Liaison Committee.

4. Who Should Be Involved?

All organisations will differ in operational circumstances. The following are, therefore, examples of employers who may be involved in a Liaison Committee:

- Port and Harbour Authorities
- Port / Berth or Terminal Operators
- Shipping Operators / Owners / Agents
- Stevedoring / Warehousing / Groupage / Container and Maintenance Companies
- Statutory Authorities (HM Customs & Excise, Immigration, Port Health, Environment Agency)
- Hauliers
- Contractors including Recruitment Agencies and Labour Supply Companies
- Leisure Users.

It should not be forgotten that those most at risk are employees and whilst it would be expected that employees would be consulted and informed by their companies, consideration should be given to including trade union representation, where this is relevant and appropriate. A sufficient level of representatives with health and safety expertise should also be included.

5. How Many Liaison Committees Are Needed?

The number of Liaison Committees will depend on the Port's circumstances, size and diversity of operations. Where only a few operations are involved, just one may well be sufficient. However where there are several involving many different operators, a number of Liaison Committees may be beneficial. If this is the case, it is vital that there is good communication between the Liaison Committees.

6. What Should They Deal With?

In establishing a Liaison Committee, it may be appropriate to consider the drawing up of agreed objectives or terms of reference. The main objective should be the promotion of co-operation between employers in instigating, developing and carrying out measures to ensure the health and safety at work of employees.

The general scope of health and safety items that might be included within the remit of a Liaison Committee is wide and will depend on the particular operations covered by each Liaison Committee. Examples include:

- Accidents / incidents where lessons can be learnt
- Emergency plans
- General rules and procedures for the port
- Navigation safety
- New developments in legislation and guidance
- Pedestrian access
- Planned changes to port systems and facilities
- Planning and execution of work

- Port wide safety campaigns
- Road / terminal traffic routes
- Training and competence
- Sharing of best practice
- The Safer Ports Initiative.

It is important, however, that items should not include a company's affairs where there are no health and safety effects on any of the other members of the Liaison Committee.

7. How Should Liaison Committees Conduct Themselves?

Liaison Committees should follow good committee practices, such as:

- Agreeing terms of reference
- Appointing a suitable Chairperson (consider rotation on a periodic basis)
- Keeping minutes, assigning actions and ensuring that these actions are carried out and their effects monitored. Otherwise there is a danger that the Liaison Committee will become a "talking shop" and fail as the participants lose interest
- Ensuring that the Liaison Committee does not become too large and unmanageable
- Ensuring good communication between Liaison Committees and within member companies. This is vital to ensure effective co-operation and understanding of the aims and achievements of the various Liaison Committees.

Useful information concerning the operation of health and safety committees can be found in HSE guidance booklet, *Safety Representatives and Safety Committees*⁵

A safe port relies on all involved being safety conscious – it's a joint effort

⁵ Safety Representatives and Safety Committees, L87 (third edition 1996), ISBN 0 7176 1220 1.

Notes:

1. The Safer Ports Initiative (SPI) was developed and implemented to reduce the number of accidents that occur each year in the ports industry.
2. The SPI complements the government's initiative outlined in its Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement published in June 2000.
3. The accident reduction targets, twice the level recommended in the Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement, are:
 - *to reduce the incidence rate of reportable fatal and major injury accidents by 10% by the end of 2005*
 - *to reduce the incidence rate of all other reportable over 3 day accidents by 20% by the end of 2005*
4. Further information is available from:

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Carthusian Court
12 Carthusian Street
London EC1M 6EZ
Telephone: 020 7260 1790
Fax: 020 7260 1795
Email: info@portskillsandsafety.co.uk
5. PSS was established by the ports industry at the end of 2001 to carry forward its combined national work on health, safety, skills and standards. PSS is a non-profit making organisation and provides the ports industry with a full range of services including representation to Government and other national European and international bodies, practical advice and information through regular newsletters and information papers, training events, guidance publications, National Occupational Standards and Vocational Qualifications. PSS is funded by subscriptions and is open to all port related organisations.

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