



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

Department of Health

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY

NHS Management Executive
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG
10 January 1997

Dear Colleague

**HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN THE NHS
NATIONAL AUDIT STUDY: HEALTH & SAFETY IN NHS
ACUTE HOSPITAL TRUSTS IN ENGLAND**

Summary

1. This MEL advises the NHS in Scotland of the publication by the National Audit Office (NAO) of the result of a recent study of Health and Safety in the NHS in Acute Hospital Trusts in England.

2. In the study the NAO examined the number, nature and potential costs of accidents together with the action taken by employers to meet their legal obligations. The study was English based and consisted of a sample of thirty acute Trusts. Following field work the NAO concluded that Trusts could do more both to reduce the level of accidents and to fulfil their legal obligations. All NHS employers are of course fully subject to health and safety legislation and failure to comply can result in prosecution. This can have serious financial consequences, as well as being damaging to the prestige of the Trust and the NHS in general.

3. The central thrust of the report is that the quality of health and safety management in the NHS is variable and needs to be given a higher priority by NHS management.

4. The NAO recommendations for Trusts are summarised in the Annex to this MEL and these are equally of relevance to Health Boards.

Action

5. All NHS employers should ensure they are meeting or are taking steps to meet fully their statutory health and safety obligations.

Addressees

For action:
General Managers, Health Boards

General Manager, Common Services Agency

General Manager, Health Education Board for Scotland

Executive Director, SCPMDE

Chief Executives, NHS Trusts

General Manager, State Hospitals Board for Scotland

Enquiries to:

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6. The NAO report entitled 'Health and Safety in NHS Acute Hospital Trusts in England' is commended to the NHS in Scotland as an example of good practice. The Report is available from The Stationery Office Ltd at a cost of £8.95 and you should quote reference number ISBN 010-262-6979.

7. This letter should be copied to Unit General Managers of the Islands Boards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James A. McGregor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

J A McGREGOR
Acting Director of Human Resources

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE NAO:

NHS Trusts should:

- establish incident recording systems, based on a single standard for the Trust, which provide reliable and timely information on all types of incidents
- examine trends in the number, types and severity of accidents and set targets for reducing the number of accidents occurring on their premises
- identify high risk areas, including those highlighted by the National Audit Office and District Audit, and take action to reduce those risks
- estimate the likely costs of different accident types to help assess the cost-effectiveness of action to reduce the number of accidents and to prioritise remedial action
- establish clear strategies to achieve full compliance with health and safety legislation and set local targets against which to measure their progress
- ensure that they comply with the legal requirement to inform the Health and Safety Executive promptly of reportable accidents which occur
- promote greater awareness among staff of the need to record accidents
- develop a health and safety plan, approved by the trust board, setting out the action they need to take to ensure full compliance with legislation
- ensure that they complete all relevant risk assessments and take action to reduce the risks identified
- give a high priority to improving compliance with manual handling legislation, given the large numbers of accidents in that area
- ensure that they have access to competent advice on health and safety
- review the progress they have made in implementing the NHS Executive's guidelines on the role of occupational health services in reducing accidents and sickness absence.