

By: Assistant Chief Fishery Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority –  
16 September 2020

Subject: Health & Safety Update

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Summary:**

This report will provide Members with an update on the work carried out to date to ensure that Health & Safety requirements and legislation are complied with.

**Recommendation:**

This report is for **COMMENT** and **NOTING** only.

**Background:**

In 2015, following a review of all policies and on the advice of the auditors, the Health & Safety Policy was revised and updated taking into account the requirements of the IFCA. Members agreed this new Health & Safety policy and required that they review it annually.

- 1.1 As required within the policy the Assistant Chief Fishery Officer and the Office Manager have met twice to formally discuss any issues that had arisen with regard to health & safety. Matters discussed were as follows:
- Accidents or Incidents
  - Employee performance.
  - Sub-contractor performance.
  - To review and arrange the training and instruction of all employees
  - Review and monitor any action plans created following audits and site inspections, and to ensure identified corrective actions are implemented as appropriate.
  - Review the effectiveness of the Authority's policy information and its dissemination to its employees and sub-contractors.
  - Review and allocate individual responsibilities for health and safety throughout the Authority and to ensure that all individuals are made fully aware of their level of responsibility.

1.2 Since the last annual report one incident has been recorded.

1.21 During the Spring cockle surveys officers were conducting surveys in Areas 2 and 3 off Southend. The sands had shifted in the last two rows in Area 2 towards Southend Pier (although not unexpected) with the creeks running deeper than expected. The procedure required to be followed to check if the quad bike could travel across creeks was to get off the bike and walk over to check depth. One of the officers parked their quad bike near to a creek to check its depth but didn't engage the handbrake. The driver of the second quad bike on the sands was coming up towards the first quad bike at this stage. The creek had sloping banks and what looked like stones in the bottom and did not look obviously deep. The officer stepped onto the bank of the creek which immediately gave way and as a result went into the water which was deeper than it had appeared and was out of his depth. When the officer fell, they had grabbed onto the handle bars of their quad bike which began to be pulled into the water. At this stage the second officer had reached the scene and was able to hold onto the first quad bike. The officer in the water was able to get himself out of the water and using rope stored on the bikes was able to pull the partially submerged quad bike onto the sand. PPE worn was chest high rubber waders, boots and a jacket. No life jacket was worn as the spray from the water would set them off. Life jackets, hand held radios and personal locator beacons (PLB) were carried on the quad bike but not on persons. No injuries occurred, and the quad bike sustained some water damage which was resolved.

As a result of this incident, it has been decided that:

- the outer two rows of Areas 2 + 3 will no longer be surveyed from land and will be surveyed using Tamesis.
- PLBs will be purchased to be worn by individual officers
- Fitted arm high waders rather than chest high waders will be worn with a lighter jacket and a lighter spec lifejacket which will be manually operated.
- A handheld radio will be worn by individual officers.

Dry suits were considered as an option, however the time of year that the surveys were now conducted in meant that officers would be in danger of overheating.

Risk assessments have been updated to reflect these actions.

1.3 External training undertaken by staff since May 2019 has been as follows:

First Aid training – two staff

One day course for safe driving of a quad bike – two staff

Small Ships Radar Navigation certificate – taken and passed by all skippers and 1st mates

Sea survival training – two staff

Basic firefighting – two staff

Conflict resolution – two staff

Competent Officer Course – two staff

Advanced Officer Course - two staff

- 1.4 All risk assessments continue to be reviewed on an annual basis or as required.

Since August 2018 the patrol vessels Tamesis and Nerissa have carried a defibrillator on board.

2. **COVID-19**

- 2.1 Our risks are relative to our organisation and when put in context with other settings (working in a hospital, retail etc) our higher risk environments would be much lower than these work places.

However, it is important we manage our environment as safely as possible and put in place long-term procedures that still work if national COVID-19 risk levels increase.

All risk assessments have been reviewed and altered to take into account Government guidelines and scientific advice and have been shared and discussed with staff. Any shielded employees worked from home and all staff that could work from home did so up to the beginning of August when Government guidelines altered. Since then shielded employees have returned to the workplace with individual risk assessments in place. Staff that wish to work from the office do so and offices have been rearranged to allow for appropriate social distancing.

PPE has been obtained and distributed across the two districts to staff that require them.

**Recommendation:**

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