



Confidential
Reporting
for Safety

How to...

respond to a report

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Why you should read this guidance

We ask members to ensure that CIRAS reports are responded to on time and to a good quality. If the reporter is not satisfied, we may come back to you for further input – so getting it right first time can save you time, improve relations with your staff, and ensure you are addressing the safety concern effectively.

Planning for success

It's good practice to have an agreed procedure for handling CIRAS reports, especially if others are likely to be contributing to responses. Involve your colleagues in its development and ensure all those affected are aware of it. Use the content of this guidance to help create your procedure.

When you receive a report

If CIRAS receives a report which requires a response from your organisation, we will send it to you using the email address you have supplied us.

- **Read the report as soon as possible after receiving it.** If you don't read the report until it's due, you risk leaving yourself insufficient time to respond effectively.
- **Check the deadline.** Please make a note of when the report response is due (see company report form) and respond within the deadline.

Deciding how to respond

Your CIRAS report will contain:

- a description of the reporter's concern
- information on the root cause and the perceived risk
- the outcome the reporter wants to see.

Use this to help you decide how to respond e.g.:

- **Can you prepare the response yourself?** If yes, this is likely to be the quickest way to respond.
- **Do you need to bring in expertise from others?** Either individually, or by setting up a panel to work together on a response.
- **Will you need approval for the response from managers?** If so, build in time for this and alert those involved. If they are not available you may need to make alternative arrangements.

Planning how you will co-ordinate your response up front will help you ensure you can undertake all the necessary steps and meet the deadline.

Tip – search the database of responses on our member's portal for some insight into how others have responded to similar concerns and issues.

Mislaid your portal login details? Contact us at enquiries@ciras.org.uk and we will resend them to you.

What should your response contain?

A good response should contain the following key elements. You can use this to develop a template for CIRAS responses.

- ✓ Acknowledge the reporter's concerns
- ✓ Detail the investigation you undertook
- ✓ Set out the detail of your response
- ✓ Explain the rationale for your response
- ✓ State the actions you have undertaken/will undertake – with timescales
- ✓ Describe how you will monitor the concern

Eight tips for a good response

1. Keep it simple

Write in clear, plain English. The reporter may not have any technical or specialist knowledge, so avoid jargon. If that's not possible, explain any technical language you use in plain English. Write abbreviations out the first time of use.

2. Be positive and constructive

Don't invalidate the reporter's concerns by trivialising or criticising them and avoid taking a defensive tone. Thank them for raising the issue and acknowledge their concerns. If the reporter sees you are taking them seriously it may encourage them to report internally next time.

3. Demonstrate a desire to reduce risk

Poor responses blame individuals and ignore management and system failures. See the report as a chance to reduce risk - look for ways to improve health and safety performance. Be objective and avoid making assumptions. Even if you conclude that the concern is unfounded, this will enable you to explain how you reached that conclusion.

4. Manage expectations

You may not be able to give the reporter what they want. Explain why and be up front about what you **can** do. The constraints you are working with may not be obvious to the reporter. If they understand why you can't meet their expectations they are more likely to accept your response.

5. Make best possible use of the information you have been provided

A CIRAS report may not include all the information you would like to support your investigation. We provide as much as we can but cannot share anything which could reveal the reporter's identity. We accept that this can be frustrating. Don't use the lack of detail as an excuse not to investigate – you may have to conduct a wider investigation as a result – but this can lead to wider safety benefits.

Tip – ask us for further information if it would help you respond effectively. We are happy to ask the reporter on your behalf for further details. However, we cannot provide you with any information which risks identifying the reporter.

6. Acknowledge local procedure may differ from written ones

Don't just quote procedure. Just because you have processes and rules in place does not mean they are being followed. Indeed, the report may be born out of a concern that procedures are not being adhered to. Or staff may not sufficiently be aware of the rules to follow them.

7. Show commitment

If you can, resolve the concern swiftly and describe what you have done in your response. Of course, your investigation may take longer than four weeks, and solutions can take time to implement. If so, include a clear action plan with timescales in your response. The more specific you can be, the better.

8. Respect confidentiality

Confidential reports allow you to focus on the issue not the individual. Avoid speculating on who made the report, and do not engage in any activity designed to reveal their identity. This undermines the value of your CIRAS membership and reduces the report's potential to make your workplace safer. It may deter staff from reporting safety issues in the future.

After you've responded

When we receive your response, we assess it against the eight factors above. We may come back to you with questions for clarification. We then send your response to the reporter and ask them to tell us if they are happy with it. This can lead to requests for further information.

- **Respond to requests for further information promptly**

This will help us work with you and the reporter to reach a point where they are happy for us to close the case.

- **Take action!**

We expect you to honour commitments you make in your response in the interests of improving safety. If a reporter contacts us to say that promised actions have not been taken, we may get back in touch with you. Failing to act may simply result in a new report being made.

- **Share the learning**

Always look for opportunities to spread the learning from your CIRAS reports. This can improve workplace safety and will demonstrate to your staff that you take safety reports seriously.

Tip – share your reports and the outcomes via your intranet communications channels e.g. intranet, newsletter. Tell staff about them during safety briefings and toolbox talks. Make CIRAS reports part of any safety reporting you do to your senior management team and Board.

Further information

If you would like further advice on forming your response, or on any aspect of CIRAS' work, contact us:

Phone: 0203 142 5369

Email: enquiries@ciras.org.uk

Web: www.ciras.org.uk

Reporting cycle

