

Health Assessments for National Grid

Dr Steve Boorman CMO– March 2016

This document is intended to summarise the rationale and approach to health assessment (medical) screening offered to National Grid employees.

Health assessments

Health assessments constitute a number of different medical screenings, required for different reasons, such as specific legal reasons or so that National Grid can offer health improvement advice. Health assessments are undertaken at regular intervals for National Grid staff whose duties are such that assessments are legally required or where they may benefit from medical assessment and advice. Health assessments are undertaken by trained health professionals (health technicians, nurses or doctors) working for National Grid's Occupational Health Provider – Optima Health.

The frequency and nature of required health assessment has been reviewed by risk assessment of specific tasks and sites and requirements for individual duties are summarised in an attachment below.

The nature and content of specific health assessments have been derived from legislative requirements, review of task risks and researched best practice.

Health assessments fall in 3 groups:

- Health Surveillance Medicals
- Fitness for Work (or Task) Medicals
- Health Monitoring Medicals (Health Promotion)

Why should employees have health assessments? There are varying reasons for the different types of medical.

Health Surveillance Medicals

Health and safety law requires employers to undertake and act upon formal risk assessments. For some workplace hazards specific legislation exists which requires employers to ensure that workers exposed to such hazards to have aspects of their health monitored by a trained health care professional. Examples include noise, vibration, dusts and some chemical and biological hazards. These hazards have the potential to cause significant injury and/or long term disability, so formal health surveillance is designed to detect early signs of injury to enable intervention to prevent further harm. There is however a wider obligation on National Grid as an employer to ensure that all relevant employees have appropriate health surveillance where this is identified by the risk assessment as being necessary.

Failure to undertake health surveillance could put employers in breach of health and safety law, and failure by employees to cooperate with the process may put themselves in breach of health and safety law and/or their contract of employment. .

Whilst consent is always a requirement of any medical review, if an employee refuses to comply with required health surveillance their managers will be advised that their continued fitness to undertake specific task(s) cannot be confirmed. Whether the employee continued the work task would be reviewed on a case by case basis.

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Fitness For Task Medicals

National Grid employees undertake a wide variety of work tasks that may in some circumstances be hazardous. Examples include working at height, lone working, working in confined spaces, driving etc. For many of these tasks there is no specific legislation on health standards. However, employers still have wide-ranging legal duties, so when health may contribute to the risk of undertaking certain tasks, the law requires a health assessment to help protect the employee (and consequently his or her work colleagues) from risk of harm, as well as to protect risk of the wider public. National Grid has identified work tasks for which regular Fitness For Task health review should be undertaken.

Where relevant health risks are identified occupational health advice enables recommendations on any work or workplace adjustments to ensure the work can be undertaken without undue risk. If an employee refuses to participate in Fitness For Task Medicals occupational health and business specialist advisers may be consulted to consider the specific hazards and risks associated with the individual work duty. Recommendations may be given to the manager to avoid or reduce hazardous task elements. If the risks cannot be reduced to an acceptable level, the manager will have to make a decision on whether the work deployment is safe or not. Individual and careful consideration will be given in such cases, with clear documentation of expert advice. Non-compliance in circumstances where risk cannot be avoided would usually result in a recommendation to withdraw from that work task.

Health Monitoring

National Grid recognises the benefits of good employee health and well-being. Healthy employees are less prone to accident or injury and better able to deliver high quality results. Review of work tasks has identified work with physical and/or psychological demands that employees may benefit from having access to health information and advice to maintain and improve their health and fitness (well-being). Health monitoring assessments are offered at regular intervals to enable health and lifestyle risk factors to be identified, and to offer advice to employees on sources of help to improve.

Monitoring includes assessment of general physical fitness, strength and agility, mental well-being and health risk factors such as blood pressure and blood sugar levels. In circumstances in which screening identifies a potential health issue, the employee may be advised to seek further support from sources such as occupational health, employee assistance programme, or their own medical advisers. National Grid has researched and provided supporting information and advice on key issues such as diet and nutrition, physical fitness etc. and has programmes with providers such as physiotherapy specialists to help with physical health issues.

The health monitoring programme includes questions about mental well-being. Support and advice is available via the Employee Assistance programme (EAP) or occupational health service.

Occupational health recommendations will help to ensure that any identified health issues may be monitored and controlled to avoid risk of causing impact on work.

Health Monitoring is usually provided as a benefit to employees to help avoid the risk of ill health. If an employee opts to not participate occupational health advice will recommend if any further precaution is required.

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Health Assessment Content

The individual constituents of health assessments are driven by the differing individual requirements described above.

Health surveillance may require measurements to be taken of hearing, respiratory or cardiovascular functions or may require formalised health questionnaires designed to identify specific health issues.

Health surveillance and Fitness for Task Assessments will usually also require consideration of medical history and any relevant medication or treatment.

Health monitoring uses simple testing to identify health risks or issues.

Medicals vary in length according to need, and the individual elements of the medicals have been matched to the requirements identified from local and generic task risk assessments.

Employee's medical information is confidential and records are kept by the occupational health service adhering to professional standards laid down by health professional Regulatory Bodies.

Information contained within may not be accessed by the employer or any other third party without the specific informed consent of the individual it relates to.

National Grid's health assessment programme is designed to ensure it complies with its legal obligations and also to maximise the health support and care available to employees.

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