

BAS Policy on Alcohol and Drugs

1. Introduction

This notice outlines the BAS policy for managing alcohol and drug issues. It provides a practical approach that reflects:

- BAS terms and conditions of service for staff and conditions of passage for visitors,
- UK law,
- the remote and dangerous environment it operates in,
- BAS's commitment to the health and welfare of its employees.

The policy focuses on BAS's remote research stations, but also covers offices, ships and any other locations where BAS staff may work.

This notice covers all staff and sets the required standard for all visitors who work or travel with the Survey. Aircrew and Mariners additionally have to conform to specific legislation that applies to their duties (as set out in their conditions of service, the Merchant Navy code of Conduct and or UK legislation).

This BAS policy is linked to a NERC policy. **NERC Policy Notice 6.7 (Alcohol and Drug Misuse)** describes the corporate approach based on matters arising in the UK at Swindon Office, a Research Centre or Institute. For the purpose of clarity, the BAS policy will take precedence in all our remote locations.

This policy is under regular review.

2. Aims and Objectives

BAS aims to have a workplace free from the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To provide practical and clear rules about alcohol and drugs that support and maintain a safe and effective working environment for all wherever BAS operates.
2. To outline responsibilities for staff and management.
3. To provide guidance on the safe and sensible drinking of alcohol (noting that alcohol consumption may not be permitted in some circumstances).
4. To provide information to help identify individuals at an early stage who may have alcohol/(prescription) drug-related problems, and provide guidance on how to deal with these as a medical problem.

3. Legal Background

There are important laws that underpin this policy and form the basis of the approach to managing alcohol and drug issues:

- *The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) regulations 1997* require NERC as the employer to take reasonable care for the health and safety of staff and of other persons affected by BAS activities.
- As a consequence BAS exercises a twenty-four hour duty of care for staff and visitors when working on ships or in the Antarctic.
- The Acts also place direct responsibility on individuals to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others.
- The *Railway and Transport Safety Act 2003* applies maximum blood alcohol levels for pilots of aircraft and ships crew when on duty. The BAS Board has decided that the limits in this Act will apply equally to non-marine staff when working during scientific cruises.

In summary, whilst BAS has a legal duty of care, all staff and visitors are also **individually responsible** for ensuring that their personal behaviour does not jeopardise the safety of BAS Operations or the health and safety of people working with the Survey.

4. The Policy

Alcohol - In the Workplace and in Transit

- 4.1. All staff and visitors must comply with the rules for the provision and consumption of alcohol that apply at their work location as agreed by the BAS Board and applied by local management e.g. the Base Commander or Master. Rules may vary slightly to reflect the nature of the environment and the size of the community, but will have general principles in common regarding safe drinking levels (see also paragraph 5.5).

Whilst on board a vessel or at a research station all individuals need to be able to perform the duties allocated to them safely, including an emergency situation. The individual must be able to muster without assistance. No individual can ever regard themselves as being totally “off duty” when at a research station, on a plane or ship.

- 4.2. It is neither acceptable nor permitted for any staff or visitors to:
- a) Work whilst under the influence of more than the UK legal limit of alcohol for driving.
 - b) Drive or operate machinery whilst under the influence of more than the UK legal limit of alcohol for driving.
 - c) Put others at risk by abusing alcohol.
 - d) Damage the reputation of BAS and NERC through actions arising from alcohol abuse.

- 4.3. The same rules apply when staff are on BAS-organised transit to their work location i.e. travelling on 'official duty'. It is not acceptable to abuse alcohol in transit, nor present oneself for transit under the influence of/suffering the effects of excess alcohol (for example when flying on a BAS plane, a commercial or military airline, or on a stop-over en route South or to the UK). It should be noted that Pilots have the legal right and responsibility to refuse passage to individuals who appear to be drunk.
- 4.4. During commercial charters in the North Sea the consumption of alcohol is completely prohibited on board our vessels for crew, staff and visitors.
- 4.5. There may be occasions when management wish to allow alcoholic drinks during the working day at the Cambridge office (or permit an increased supply of alcoholic drinks than the norm at a Research Station) to celebrate a significant event e.g. the visit of a VIP, a retirement, Midwinter celebration or Christmas. This is permitted provided and assuming:
- Individuals accept and take responsibility for their personal circumstances as to whether it would be appropriate to drink alcohol.
 - The supply is limited to a reasonable and proportionate amount.
 - Non alcoholic beverages are also available.
 - The events are timed so that wherever possible resumption of formal work is not required.
 - The special occasions are exactly that i.e. special and infrequent.
 - Emergency arrangements in the Antarctic or at sea are not compromised (this may require some staff not to drink alcohol at all).

Drugs – In the Workplace and in Transit

- 4.6. BAS will not tolerate the use of illegal drugs anywhere within its operation at any time. It is neither acceptable nor permitted for any staff or visitors to:
- a) Work whilst under the influence of any drugs, illegal or prescribed, that may have a dangerous effect on performance.
 - b) Drive or operate machinery whilst under the influence of any drugs, illegal or prescribed, that may have a dangerous effect on performance.
 - c) Put others at risk by abusing drugs.
 - d) Damage the reputation of BAS and NERC through actions arising from drug abuse.
- 4.7. Anyone:
- suspected by management of being under the influence of illegal drugs,
 - found in the possession of illegal drugs,
 - suspected of supplying illegal drugs; or
 - abusing prescription drugs,

will be suspended immediately and will be subject to disciplinary and legal procedures.

- 4.8. Staff working overseas who are taking prescription medicines that may affect performance are expected to inform their line manager/manager on location who may need to consult BASMU.

Disciplinary action in line with the procedures set out in **Appendix A** will apply to those who do not comply with this policy.

5. Medical Problems with Alcohol and Prescribed Drugs

- 5.1. Addiction or dependency on alcohol or prescribed drugs is a recognised medical problem. Where individuals advise BAS of their condition (or it becomes clear through performance or discussion with management) BAS will aim to manage it in line with NERC Policy Notice 6.7, offering counselling and, where available, medical support.
- 5.2. During service at sea and in the Antarctic it may not be appropriate for safety reasons to make unqualified use of the guidelines in Policy Notice 6.7. Lack of facilities, access to senior management and the safety requirements of Antarctic operations may require procedures to be suspended until they can be conducted in the UK.
- 5.3. When counselling and medical treatment for addiction fails or where the individual refuses to co-operate with management, disciplinary action (as outlined in **Appendix A**) will be taken. If the problem occurs overseas, repatriation to the UK will normally be required if this has not already taken place.
- 5.4. Staff who seek treatment and rehabilitation for alcohol or prescribed drug problems, will retain normal job security and development opportunities unless they are considered unfit for a given job for performance reasons, safety reasons, or by the BAS Medical Unit (BASMU) or another NERC appointed health professional.
- 5.5. BAS will not provide counselling or other on-going support for a medical problem relating to the use of illegal drugs.

6. Practical Guidance for Individuals and Managers

Information about safe limits and the health issues relating to alcohol is attached to this policy at **Appendix B**. Information, education and training on the misuse of alcohol is available from a variety of sources including BAS/NERC Welfare services, BASMU and BAS Human Resources. Information on drugs is attached to this policy at **Appendix C**.

7. Summary of Responsibilities

Individuals

- 7.1. Every person working on a BAS ship or research station or in transit or any other BAS location must take personal responsibility for their own alcohol consumption. They are required do this to safeguard not only their own health and safety but also that of their colleagues and of BAS operations.

They must:

- Comply with the BAS Policy on Alcohol and Drugs.
- Limit their intake of alcohol taking into account the BAS Medical Unit guidelines (**Appendix B**) and their knowledge of how alcohol affects them.
- Co-operate with management on the implementation of this policy.
- Not take any alcohol on board BAS ships or research stations without the Masters' or Base Commanders prior approval.
- Inform their manager of any prescription medicine that they need to use that may affect their performance.

Management

7.2. Managers must:

- Comply with the BAS Policy on Alcohol and Drugs.
- Implement the BAS Policy on Alcohol and Drugs.
- Identify and communicate to staff safety critical jobs/activities where working under any influence of alcohol or drugs would present an imminent danger to health and safety.
- Identify individuals who may be jeopardising health, safety, performance and their ability to carry out their duties effectively and take action to rectify the situation.
- Offer support to individuals who advise that they have a dependency or addiction problem (alcohol or prescription drugs only, not illegal drugs).
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against individuals who refuse to co-operate in implementing this policy.
- Consider alcohol or drug use as possible contributory factors in any accidents, incidents or near misses and include this in reports.

Appendix A

BAS Disciplinary Process for Incidents of Alcohol or Drug Misuse

This guidance is allied to **NERC Disciplinary Procedures (Policy Notice 6.2)**, and is applicable in the BAS specific circumstances and locations described below. It sets out a process for Base Commanders (BC) and Line Managers (LM) that will be followed when the misuse of alcohol or drugs is evident. All Non-BAS staff and visitors are expected to meet BAS standards of behaviour in the use of alcohol and drugs; instances of abuse/suspected abuse will be referred to their employers.

Note: Masters on BAS ships will be required to use the relevant section of the 'Merchant Navy Code of Conduct' when incidents involve Mariners signed under Articles. The rules relating to Masters are different and need to be referred to BAS Human Resources.

The following policy will apply when dealing with all non-mariners on board BAS vessels and all incidents involving Mariners who are signed off Articles e.g. in transit or shore side.

Alcohol

Incidences of misuse fall into 4 main categories:

- anti-social behaviour (including noise, violence or a hostile atmosphere);
- adverse impact on performance and ability to work;
- chronic and acute health problems;
- safety, including personal safety and the ability to respond in an emergency.

They will all be treated in the same way (except in respect of consideration of mitigating circumstances where a medical problem has been pre-advised).

First Incident

- The BC/Line Manager/Master may treat a first incident as a minor offence (although this will depend on the circumstances at the time, and the degree of damage/operational and reputational risk involved).
- An immediate oral reprimand will be issued, making clear that any further occurrence is likely to result in more serious disciplinary action.
- There is no requirement to give individuals a written record of the reprimand, but it is recommended that a brief note of the discussion (i.e. date, theme and initials) is recorded for future reference. If a line manager issues an oral warning, the BC/Master should be informed.

Repeat/Repeated Incidents/Serious First Incident

- BCs/Line Manager (LM)/Masters are required to contact BAS Human Resources for guidance as soon as possible. This is obviously critical when there are any injuries or when any external authorities are involved.
- The BC/LM/Master will inform the individual orally that the matter is potentially serious and that formal disciplinary procedures may be used. BAS Human Resources will then liaise with management to carry out any necessary investigation, which may include taking statements from witnesses.

- The Head of Human Resources, consulting with the Head of Corporate Services and relevant senior management will consider the evidence and make a decision as to: whether there is a case to answer; whether the matter may be dealt with informally; or whether a formal disciplinary panel is required.
- If a formal disciplinary panel is required the individual will be charged in writing and will be required to attend a hearing (with the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative, colleague or friend not involved in the incident if desired). Individuals will be given the opportunity to make a statement in writing beforehand, and to give their account at the hearing itself.
- After the hearing BCs/LMs/Masters will send a note of the meeting and any other relevant documentary evidence to the Head of Human Resources, who will liaise with the Director, BAS. If the charge is considered proven a penalty will be applied. Penalties that may be applied include a written warning, demotion, suspension without pay or removal of Antarctic or other bonuses. Individuals may also be required to compensate BAS for any loss.
- In serious cases that are considered gross misconduct (in line with Policy Notice 6.2), individuals can expect to be dismissed.
- Staff may appeal the outcome of a disciplinary hearing in line with the procedure set out in Policy Notice 6.2.
- BAS reserves the right to accelerate the process or repatriate any member of staff before the above process is complete when to do otherwise could jeopardise the safety and or well-being of the individual involved, or unduly affect BAS operations.

For further details about disciplinary processes and appeal procedures, staff are advised to consult their specific terms and conditions of service and or speak to BAS Human Resources.

Drugs

BAS does not tolerate the use of illegal drugs. A first offence will be treated as a serious breach of discipline requiring immediate formal action. If South, individuals are likely to be repatriated immediately (or as soon as practicable) to the UK, followed by dismissal if the charge is considered proven.

Appendix B

Guidance on Alcohol Consumption

Introduction

BAS recognises that alcohol can play a useful role in providing a diversion from the pressures of work when used in moderation, off duty, for social and relaxation purposes. It also recognises that a research station or vessel can be a person's home for long periods as well as a place of work. However, the abuse of alcohol is a very high-risk activity for individuals, their colleagues and BAS operations. When the work location is remote, the risk is even greater. The emphasis therefore must be on moderation and application of the general policy.

The maximum blood alcohol level for a professional seaman (including Masters and other professional seafarers) who is on duty is the same as for driving in the UK, 80 milligrams (mg) of alcohol in 100 millilitres (ml) of blood or 35 micrograms of alcohol in 100ml of breath. This also applies to non-marine staff when working during scientific cruises, and when a mariner is not on duty but in the event of an emergency would be required to take action to protect the safety of passengers.

The limit for Pilots and aircrew and Air Traffic Controllers is 20mg in 100ml of blood or 9 micrograms in 100ml of breath. For aircraft Maintenance Engineers the limits are the same as for ships crew set out in the previous paragraph.

Advice on Amount of Alcohol Consumed

The BAS Senior Medical Officer recommends that for operational purposes personal alcohol consumption should not exceed 21 units/week for men or 14 units/week for women. This is lower than the maximum consumption advised by the government in UK which is 28 units/week for men and 21/week for women, but BASMU consider that the unique nature of the Antarctic environment makes a lower level sensible for the following reasons:

- Alcohol can have dangerous physiological effects in modifying the body's response to cold.
- Accidents are more likely with greater alcohol consumption.
- Greater alcohol consumption can have deleterious effects on the group social dynamics.
- Medical care for the chronic effects of alcohol is more difficult in the Antarctic.

A unit is equal to:

- a half pint of normal strength beer
- a single measure (25ml) of spirits or a small glass of wine (125mls) ;
- strong lagers, beers or cider should be counted as 3 to 4 measures per pint

The "standard" wine glass is only 125mls, and "standard" wine is 10% alcohol. Most wines are 12-14% alcohol and most glasses are 175mls. Each glass is usually therefore about 1.6 to 2.2 units.

There is medical evidence that a very moderate amount of alcohol is beneficial to your health. It does not matter in what form this is consumed (there is no evidence that red wine is better than anything else).

Ideally individuals should aim for a couple of alcohol free days a week. Frequent binge drinking (drinking more than 5 or 6 units in one sitting) is unhealthy, potentially unsafe and should be avoided.

Everyone's individual response to alcohol varies, but as a general guide one unit of alcohol will give a blood concentration of about 20mg% (the driving limit in UK is 80mg%, in many other countries however it is 50mg% and the Government is considering reducing it to this level). It takes at least an hour to get rid of one unit from the body's systems. So the faster you drink, the higher your blood alcohol level will become.

Sensible drinking is therefore paced drinking.

If you are likely to be required to respond to an emergency you should always try to keep below the UK legal driving level as any increase above this leads to marked deterioration in your ability to react, think straight, and generally do your job.

If you drink a lot, it will take many hours to eliminate all the alcohol in your body. If your blood alcohol is 160mg/100ml at 0200, you will not be below the driving limit until 0700-0900. You will not be completely sober until 1000-1200. Remember this if you are required to operate machinery next morning after a party.

Effects of Alcohol

These can be split into two; the effects of a lot of alcohol at one time (acute or binge effects) and those which happen over a longer time span (chronic effects).

Binge drinking incurs considerable risks from:

- Alcohol poisoning.
- Irrational behaviour.
- Choking and death through inhalation of vomit.
- Increased risk of injury.
- Interpersonal violence.

Research has demonstrated that there is an increased risk of accidents due to:

- Impaired judgement.
- Reduced reaction times.
- Failure to respond appropriately to emergencies.

Those who work under the influence of drink or are incapacitated by drink are unable to carry out their duties safely and are a risk to the health and safety of their colleagues as well as themselves.

Alcohol dilates peripheral blood vessels and can lead to problems maintaining the core body temperature; this is especially dangerous in the weather conditions prevalent in the Antarctic.

Regular, excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to:

- Deterioration in personal health.
- Liver damage.
- Lowered resistance to infection.
- Changes in behaviour.
- Alcohol dependence and more serious potentially fatal medical conditions in the long term.
- Serious potentially fatal medical conditions such as Liver Cirrhosis, Pancreatitis and Oesophageal Varices in the longer term.

Signs of Alcohol Misuse

These include:

- Hand tremor.
- Facial flushing and bleary eyes.
- Proneness to accidents.
- Moodiness, irritability and lethargy.
- Decreased work performance, poor time keeping and/or absenteeism.
- The shakes (delirium tremens).

Some of these symptoms may also be indicative of general ill health.

Appendix C

Drug Misuse

General

Drug misuse is defined as the possession (without prescription), supply or production of controlled drugs and substances listed in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (including cocaine and crack, ecstasy and GHB, heroin and other opiates, LSD, amphetamines (speed), barbiturates, some minor tranquillisers and cannabis).

Whether deliberate or unintentional it is an offence to possess, supply or produce any of these substances, or to knowingly allow drugs to be used, supplied or produced anywhere on BAS premises or ships.

It is an offence under UK law for a professional seaman or aircrew to be under the influence of a drug whilst on duty if that drug impairs their judgement or ability to do their job.

It is not illegal for an individual to possess drugs prescribed by a doctor for their own use. Possession of these drugs for medicinal use on BAS premises is not a disciplinary offence. Staff and visitors should note however that prescribed drugs must not be passed to others. Individuals must be aware of their duties under health and safety legislation and ensure that, whilst under the influence of prescribed drugs, they do not carry out activities that could create a danger to themselves or others.

The use of solvents or materials containing solvents as intoxicants is illegal and is not allowed anywhere on BAS premises or ships.

Recognising Cases of Drug Misuse

A drug problem in an individual is identifiable in various ways and drugs affect different people in different ways.

The signs include:

- Increased short-term sick absence.
- Changes in appearance.
- Loss of efficiency.
- Behavioural changes.
- More frequent mistakes and accidents.
- Memory loss.
- Deterioration in relationships with other people.
- Poor time keeping and unexpected absences.

Line Manager's Responsibilities

It is not a line manager's responsibility to diagnose drug abuse, but to identify problems with performance. If a drug problem is suspected managers must immediately advise senior management and seek advice from BAS Human Resources.

Base Commanders, ships Masters and senior management are entitled to search premises and seize illegal substances brought on to BAS premises or ships when there is a reasonable suspicion that such substances are present.