



Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

1974 CHAPTER 37

PART I

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE IN CONNECTION WITH WORK, AND CONTROL OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES AND CERTAIN EMISSIONS INTO THE ATMOSPHERE

Enforcement

20 Powers of inspectors.

- (1) Subject to the provisions of section 19 and this section, an inspector may, for the purpose of carrying into effect any of the relevant statutory provisions within the field of responsibility of the enforcing authority which appointed him, exercise the powers set out in subsection (2) below.
- (2) The powers of an inspector referred to in the preceding subsection are the following, namely—
 - (a) at any reasonable time (or, in a situation which in his opinion is or may be dangerous, at any time) to enter any premises which he has reason to believe it is necessary for him to enter for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1) above;
 - (b) to take with him a constable if he has reasonable cause to apprehend any serious obstruction in the execution of his duty;
 - (c) without prejudice to the preceding paragraph, on entering any premises by virtue of paragraph (a) above to take with him—
 - (i) any other person duly authorised by his (the inspector's) enforcing authority; and
 - (ii) any equipment or materials required for any purpose for which the power of entry is being exercised;
 - (d) to make such examination and investigation as may in any circumstances be necessary for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1) above;
 - (e) as regards any premises which he has power to enter, to direct that those premises or any part of them, or anything therein, shall be left

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- undisturbed (whether generally or in particular respects) for so long as is reasonably necessary for the purpose of any examination or investigation under paragraph (d) above;
- (f) to take such measurements and photographs and make such recordings as he considers necessary for the purpose of any examination or investigation under paragraph (d) above;
- (g) to take samples of any articles or substances found in any premises which he has power to enter, and of the atmosphere in or in the vicinity of any such premises;
- (h) in the case of any article or substance found in any premises which he has power to enter, being an article or substance which appears to him to have caused or to be likely to cause danger to health or safety, to cause it to be dismantled or subjected to any process or test (but not so as to damage or destroy it unless this is in the circumstances necessary for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1) above);
- (i) in the case of any such article or substance as is mentioned in the preceding paragraph, to take possession of it and detain it for so long as is necessary for all or any of the following purposes, namely—
- (i) to examine it and do to it anything which he has power to do under that paragraph;
 - (ii) to ensure that it is not tampered with before his examination of it is completed;
 - (iii) to ensure that it is available for use as evidence in any proceedings for an offence under any of the relevant statutory provisions or any proceedings relating to a notice under section 21 or 22;
- (j) to require any person whom he has reasonable cause to believe to be able to give any information relevant to any examination or investigation under paragraph (d) above to answer (in the absence of persons other than a person nominated by him to be present and any persons whom the inspector may allow to be present) such questions as the inspector thinks fit to ask and to sign a declaration of the truth of his answers;
- (k) to require the production of, inspect, and take copies of or of any entry in—
- (i) any books or documents which by virtue of any of the relevant statutory provisions are required to be kept; and
 - (ii) any other books or documents which it is necessary for him to see for the purposes of any examination or investigation under paragraph (d) above;
- (l) to require any person to afford him such facilities and assistance with respect to any matters or things within that person's control or in relation to which that person has responsibilities as are necessary to enable the inspector to exercise any of the powers conferred on him by this section;
- (m) any other power which is necessary for the purpose mentioned in subsection (1) above.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision as to the procedure to be followed in connection with the taking of samples under subsection (2)(g) above (including provision as to the way in which samples that have been so taken are to be dealt with).
- (4) Where an inspector proposes to exercise the power conferred by subsection (2)(h) above in the case of an article or substance found in any premises, he shall, if so

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requested by a person who at the time is present in and has responsibilities in relation to those premises, cause anything which is to be done by virtue of that power to be done in the presence of that person unless the inspector considers that its being done in that person's presence would be prejudicial to the safety of the State.

- (5) Before exercising the power conferred by subsection (2)(h) above in the case of any article or substance, an inspector shall consult such persons as appear to him appropriate for the purpose of ascertaining what dangers, if any, there may be in doing anything which he proposes to do under that power.
- (6) Where under the power conferred by subsection (2)(i) above an inspector takes possession of any article or substance found in any premises, he shall leave there, either with a responsible person or, if that is impracticable, fixed in a conspicuous position, a notice giving particulars of that article or substance sufficient to identify it and stating that he has taken possession of it under that power; and before taking possession of any such substance under that power an inspector shall, if it is practicable for him to do so, take a sample thereof and give to a responsible person at the premises a portion of the sample marked in a manner sufficient to identify it.
- (7) No answer given by a person in pursuance of a requirement imposed under subsection (2)(j) above shall be admissible in evidence against that person or the [F1 spouse or civil partner] of that person in any proceedings.
- (8) Nothing in this section shall be taken to compel the production by any person of a document of which he would on grounds of legal professional privilege be entitled to withhold production on an order for discovery in an action in the High Court or, as the case may be, on an order for the production of documents in an action in the Court of Session.
- [F2(9) Nothing in this section is to be read as enabling an inspector to secure the disclosure by a telecommunications operator or postal operator of communications data without the consent of the operator.
- (10) In subsection (9) “communications data”, “postal operator” and “telecommunications operator” have the same meanings as in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (see sections 261 and 262 of that Act).]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 20(7) substituted (5.12.2005) by [Civil Partnership Act 2004 \(c. 33\)](#), ss. 261(1), 263, [Sch. 27 para. 49](#); [S.I. 2005/3175](#), [art. 2\(2\)](#)
- F2** S. 20(9)(10) inserted (22.7.2020) by [Investigatory Powers Act 2016 \(c. 25\)](#), s. 272(1), [Sch. 2 para. 1](#) (with [Sch. 9 paras. 7, 8, 10](#)); [S.I. 2020/766](#), [reg. 2\(d\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 20 applied by [S.I. 1989/840](#), [arts. 2-10](#)
- S. 20 extended (E.W.S.) (1.10.1996) by [S.I. 1996/1513](#), [reg. 10](#)
- S. 20 excluded (with saving) (E.W.S.) (1.12.1997) by [S.I. 1997/1840](#), [regs. 7, 9](#)
- S. 20 applied (with modifications) (9.1.1995) by [S.I. 1994/3260](#), [reg. 17\(3\)\(5\)](#)
- S. 20: power to apply conferred (E.W.S.) (28.8.1995) by [1995 c. 15](#), [ss. 2\(4\)\(b\)](#), 5 (with s. 3(5))
- S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (16.4.1996) by [S.I. 1996/772](#), [reg. 17](#)
- S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.3.1996) by [S.I. 1996/192](#), [reg. 15](#), [Sch. 14 para. 1\(b\)](#)
- S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.7.1997) by [S.I. 1997/831](#), [reg. 19\(1\)-\(4\)](#), [Sch. 15 para. 1\(a\)\(b\)](#)

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- S. 20 applied (15.11.2000) by S.I. 2000/2831, **reg. 26(1)(a)**
- C2** S. 20 modified by **Gas Act 1986** (c. 44, SIF 44:2), s. 67(3), **Sch. 8 para. 6(4)**
 S. 20 applied (E.W.S.) (15.12.1999) by 1998 c. 17, s. **8(1)**, (with s. 9(1)(2), Sch. 3 para. 5(1)); S.I. 1999/161, **art. 2(1)(2)**
- C3** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/3073, **reg. 28, Sch. 6 para. 1(b)**
- C4** S. 20 modified (6.4.1992) by S.I. 1992/711, **regs. 1(2), 28(3)(b)(5)(a)**
- C5** S. 20 extended (with modifications) (1.4.1999) by S.I. 1999/743, **reg. 20(1), (2)(3)**
 S. 20 applied (E.W.S.) (20.9.2001) by S.I. 2001/2975, **reg. 19(a)**
 S. 20 applied (E.W.S.) (24.7.2002) by S.I. 2002/1689, **reg. 14(1)(a)**
 S. 20 applied (31.3.2002) by S.I. 2002/528, **reg. 10**
 S. 20 applied (16.5.2002) by S.I. 2002/1166, **reg. 31** (with art. 37)
- C6** Ss. 18-26 applied (with modifications) (19.11.1999) by S.I. 1999/2892, **reg. 16(1)**
- C7** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (29.11.1999) by S.I. 1999/2001, **reg. 24(1), Sch. 8 para. 1(b)**
- C8** S. 20 applied (11.7.2001) by S.I. 2001/2127, **arts. 4(1), 5(1)(2), 6(1), 7(1), 8(1), 10** (with art. 11) (as amended by S.I. 2009/1750, **art. 2(2)(4)**)
- C9** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (22.3.2003 for certain purposes and 22.9.2003 otherwise) by S.I. 2003/403, **regs. 1(2), 23(2)(a)(3)**; s. 19-22 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (3.5.2004) by S.I. 2004/129, **reg. 23(3)(a)**; s. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (9.6.2004) by S.I. 2004/1309, **reg. 17**; s. 20 applied (E.W.S.) (22.4.2005) by S.I. 2005/928, **reg. 4(2)(3)(5)(6)**; ss. 19-22 applied (2.4.2006) by S.I. 2006/397, **reg. 34**
- C10** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (the amendment coming into force in accordance with art. 1(1) of the amending S.I.) by **The Channel Tunnel (Safety) Order 2007** (S.I. 2007/3531), **art. 4(2)(3)(a)** (subject to (4)-(6)) (with art. 7)
- C11** Ss. 1-59, 80-82 applied (temp.) (5.8.2009) by **The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) Order 2001** (S.I. 2001/2127), **arts. 8A, 8B** (as inserted by S.I. 2009/1750, **art. 2(3)**)
- C12** S. 20 applied in part (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (6.4.2010) by **The Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Non-Interoperable Rail System) Regulations 2010** (S.I. 2010/432), **reg. 6(2)(3)(a)**
- C13** S. 20 applied in part (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (6.4.2010) by **The Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010** (S.I. 2010/724), **regs. 1(2), 38(2)(3)(a)**
- C14** Ss. 19-28 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (4.7.2010 for certain purposes and otherwise 4.7.2013) by **The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010** (S.I. 2010/1554), **regs. 1, 18, 37(1)**, {Sch. 4 paras. 1, 2}
- C15** Ss. 1-59 applied by S.I. 2001/2127 art. 8A 8B (as inserted (E.W.S.) (6.4.2011) by **The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) (Variation) Order 2011** (S.I. 2011/745), **arts. 1(1), 3(2)**)
- C16** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (16.1.2012) by **The Railways (Interoperability) Regulations 2011** (S.I. 2011/3066), **regs. 1(2), 39(2)(3)(a)** (with reg. 3)
- C17** Ss. 18-26 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.9.2013) by **The Biocidal Products and Chemicals (Appointment of Authorities and Enforcement) Regulations 2013** (S.I. 2013/1506), **regs. 2(1), 8(1)** (with reg. 3(4), (5), 8(2)-(7), 31)
- C18** Ss. 19, 20 applied (1.3.2014) by **The Biocidal Products and Chemicals (Appointment of Authorities and Enforcement) Regulations 2013** (S.I. 2013/1506), **regs. 2(4), 19** (with reg. 3(4)(5)31)
- C19** Ss. 16-26 applied (E.W.S.) (1.10.2014) by **The Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 2014** (S.I. 2014/1663), **regs. 1, 30(2)(a)** (with reg. 3(1)(2))
- C20** Ss. 19-28 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.10.2014) by **The Explosives Regulations 2014** (S.I. 2014/1638), **reg. 1(1), Sch. 12 paras. 2, 3**
- C21** Ss. 16-21 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.6.2015) by **The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015** (S.I. 2015/483), **regs. 1(1), 27(1)(a)** (with reg. 3(2))
- C22** Ss. 18-28 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (1.6.2015) by **The Biocidal Products and Chemicals (Appointment of Authorities and Enforcement) Regulations 2013** (S.I. 2013/1506), **regs. 2(2), 17(1)** (with reg. 3(4)(5)31)

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- C23** Ss. 18-21 applied (E.W.S.) (19.7.2015) by [The Offshore Installations \(Offshore Safety Directive\) \(Safety Case etc.\) Regulations 2015 \(S.I. 2015/398\)](#), regs. 1, **36(8)(a)** (with reg. 4(2), Sch. 14)
- C24** Ss. 16-22 applied (E.W.S.) (19.7.2015) by [The Offshore Installations \(Offshore Safety Directive\) \(Safety Case etc.\) Regulations 2015 \(S.I. 2015/398\)](#), regs. 1, **36(1)(a)** (with reg. 4(2), Sch. 14)
- C25** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (17.8.2015) by [The Pyrotechnic Articles \(Safety\) Regulations 2015 \(S.I. 2015/1553\)](#), reg. 1, Sch. 8 paras. 1(c), **2**
- C26** Ss. 19-28 applied (with modifications) by S.I. 2014/1638, Sch. 12 paras. 5-7 (as substituted (E.W.S.) (20.4.2016) by [The Explosives Regulations 2014 \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/315\)](#)), reg. 1, **Sch. 1** (with regs. 2(1), 15))
- C27** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (E.W.S.) (8.12.2016) by [The Equipment and Protective Systems Intended for Use in Potentially Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/1107\)](#), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 4 para. 1(b)**
- C28** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (8.12.2016) by [The Pressure Equipment \(Safety\) Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/1105\)](#), reg. 1, Sch. 8 paras. 1(b), **2** (with reg. 88)
- C29** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (8.12.2016) by [The Simple Pressure Vessels \(Safety\) Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/1092\)](#), reg. 1, Sch. 6 paras. 1(b), **2** (with reg. 3)
- C30** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (8.12.2016) by [The Lifts Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/1093\)](#), reg. 1, Sch. 8 paras. 1(c), **2** (with regs. 3-5)
- C31** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (8.12.2016) by [The Electrical Equipment \(Safety\) Regulations 2016 \(S.I. 2016/1101\)](#), reg. 1, Sch. 4 paras. 1, **2** (with reg. 3)
- C32** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (21.4.2018) by [The Gas Appliances \(Enforcement\) and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/389\)](#), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 2** (with reg. 2)
- C33** S. 20 applied (with modifications) (21.4.2018) by [The Personal Protective Equipment \(Enforcement\) Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/390\)](#), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 2** (with reg. 2(1)-(3))
- C34** Ss. 19-22 applied (with modifications) (30.7.2018) by [The Cableway Installations Regulations 2018 \(S.I. 2018/816\)](#), regs. 1, **21(1)-(3)** (with reg. 4)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 20(9) omitted by [2024 c. 9 Sch. para. 1](#)
- s. 20(10) omitted by [2024 c. 9 Sch. para. 1](#)