



The Society for Radiological Protection

incorporating The Institute of Radiation Protection

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Suitable Radiation Protection Advisers

A Guidance Note for Employers from the SRP

Employers, Radiation Protection Advisers and the Law.

Employers who work, or want to work with ionising radiations in Great Britain must first look at the Ionising Radiations Regulations (IRR99) to see if they have to formally consult a Radiation Protection Adviser (RPA). (Northern Ireland publishes separate regulations)

There is no obligation to consult an RPA if the work is confined to those categories that are listed in Schedule 1 of IRR99.

If the work falls outside the categories listed in Schedule 1, the employer must get formal advice from a **suitable** RPA as to how to comply with IRR99 **and** must appoint the suitable RPA in writing.

What is an RPA?

An RPA is someone who has met the criteria of core competence defined by the HSE and has a valid certificate to demonstrate this.

Core competence can be demonstrated by being awarded either:

- a valid Certificate of Competence by an Assessing Body recognised by the HSE (like RPA2000), or
- an NVQ (or SVQ) in Radiation Protection at Level 4 issued no more than five years previously.

A person is an RPA once they have been awarded a Certificate or an NVQ (or SVQ). They need not have been appointed by any employer.

It is the **employer's legal responsibility** to ensure that an RPA is **suitable** to advise upon that employer's specific work with ionising radiations **before** the RPA is appointed.

What is a Suitable RPA?

A **suitable** RPA is an RPA who has "*the specific knowledge, experience and competence required for giving advice on the particular working conditions or circumstances for which the employer is making the appointment*". (IRR99 ACOP Para 216)

Suitable RPA	=	RPA (core competence)	+	Specific knowledge, experience and competence
What is required?		The RPA has demonstrated to an Assessing or Awarding Body that he/she meets the HSE criteria of competence.		The RPA has demonstrated to the employer that he/she has sufficient understanding, based on knowledge, experience and competence, to give advice on that employer's particular work/conditions.
Who sets the standard?		The HSE		The employer
Who has to be satisfied?		The Assessing or Awarding Body		The employer
Proof?		Valid Certificate of Competence (that is not time-expired) or NVQ Level 4 in Radiation Protection Practice awarded in the last 5 years.		The RPA's work history.

To gain suitability for an employer, an RPA may attend various internal or external training courses, or carry out work to gain experience specifically arranged to make the RPA suitable for the particular kind of work. This is especially relevant to the larger employers who employ their RPAs and will have Personal Development Plans designed specifically to make their employees suitable for them, or to make an RPA already suitable in one part of their business suitable for some other part. For small employers (i.e. those using radioactivity to a small degree), an RPA might usefully identify to the employer the additional training that RPA would require before the formal appointment as a suitable RPA.

It follows that an RPA who is suitable for one employer may not be suitable for another employer. This is no different to an employer choosing any other consultant to help his business based on the consultant's qualifications **and** CV, i.e. proven competence plus relevant history/experience.

RPA Bodies

According to IRR99 a “*radiation protection adviser*” is a *person who* or a *body which* meets such criteria of competence specified by the HSE. An RPA Body consists of a group of people who have amongst them one or more RPAs and operating procedures to ensure that all advice given to an employer by the RPA Body is traceable to an RPA. An RPA Body has to be formally recognised by the HSE. A list of RPA Bodies is provided by the HSE on its website

A **suitable** RPA Body is one which satisfies an employer that it has the specific or additional knowledge, experience and competence to advise on that employer's particular use of ionising radiations.

How do I find a suitable RPA?

Look on the RPA 2000 website at the list of RPAs willing to provide consultancy.
Advertise your requirement with the Professional Bodies e.g. SRP, IPEM and AURPO
Look in the professional journals.
Ask other employers who are carrying out similar work with ionising radiation.
Ask your trade association or the HSE.

Some Points to Note

- The RPA can either be an employee of the employer or an external consultant.
- IRR99 does not impose any duties specifically on the RPA; the employer and employees have a legal responsibility to comply with the regulations.
- Where the RPA is employed directly by an employer, care must be exercised by both the employer and the RPA to identify when the RPA is providing advice to the employer under IRR99 and when he/she is operating in another employee capacity. For example, the appointment of an internal manager as RPA may create conflict between his managerial duties and his RPA role. In this circumstance the relevant roles must be well defined and monitored.

Over-riding conclusions

- A professional RPA has a contractual (and moral) responsibility to ensure that he/she is **suitable** for appointment by an employer before offering RPA services to that employer.
- It is the employer's **legal responsibility** to ensure that any appointed RPA is **suitable** for that appointment.
- An employer would be **legally liable** if an RPA were appointed who was **not suitable** for that employer's specific work with ionising radiations.

Colin Partington, Chair
Qualifications and Professional Standards Committee
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References

- HSC Publication L121 Work with ionising radiation ISBN 0-7176-1746-7
- RPA2000 website <http://www.srp-uk.org/rpa2000/consultants.doc>
- RPA Bodies on the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/ionising/rpa/bodieshse.htm>