Health and Safety Warning Notice 98/01

High Voltage 11 kV electricity distribution equipment: Switchgear and Cowans RA4 oil switches and associated switchgear - prohibition of live operation (Types: RAE4, RA6, RAE6 & RAO4).

SUBJECT CONTACT POINT:
P D Meakin  
AD Industrial Processes  
Technical Standards Directorate  
Sutton Coldfield Mil extn 2169

NOTICE AUTHORISED BY:
P D Meakin  
AD Industrial Processes

DEFENCE ESTATE ORGANISATION
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Safety Notice

Direct Dialling 0121 311 2169

High Voltage 11 kV electricity distribution equipment: Switchgear and Cowans RA4 oil switches and associated switchgear.

INTRODUCTION

1. THE CONTENTS OF THIS NOTICE ARE TO SECURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK ETC ACT 1974.

2. This Notice is for the attention of Commanding Officers, Chief Executives, Heads of Establishment, Property Managers, Defence Lands Agents, Establishment Works Consultants (EWCs), Works Services Managers (WSMs), Authorising Engineers, Authorised Persons and Contractors, involved in works for MOD.

3. This Notice is to be read by all persons involved with any works associated with the equipment that is the subject of this Notice.

4. No work involving expenditure on an MOD account is to be carried out without authority from the Property Manager or the appropriate MOD officer for that location or facility.

5. Any work required as a result of this Safety Notice must be carried out in accordance with MOD Safety Rules and Procedures as applicable.

6. The Co-ordinating Authorised Person, or other responsible person, is to notify the Property Manager:

   of the location of any equipment which exists on the establishment and is subject of this notice as soon as it has been identified;

   and

   when the relevant modifications are completed, that the appropriate remedial action has been carried out.

7. Defects are to be immediately reported to the Property Manager and the applicable Authorising Engineer who must impose appropriate operating restrictions on the equipment that is the subject of this Notice, until remedial action is completed.

8. For MOD Establishments occupied by United States Visiting Forces (USVF), the responsibilities of Property Manager, EWC and WSM are jointly held by the USVF and DEO(USF). At base level this jointly managed organisation is to take appropriate action to
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implement the contents of this Notice. Where this Notice contains procedures which differ significantly from USVF practice, a DEO(USF) Code of Practice section will be issued.
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REQUIREMENT

9. ACTION ADDRESSEES ARE TO ENSURE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS PASSED TO THEIR PROPERTY MANAGERS OR OTHER RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS WITHOUT DELAY.

10. All live operation of Switchgear and Cowans RA4 oil switches and associated switchgear is prohibited with immediate effect. The types affected are RAE4, RA6, RAE6 & RAO4. This prohibition is to be imposed indefinitely and the switchgear affected by this Notice will need to be replaced.

BACKGROUND

11. An Electricity Association Notice has been received imposing a suspension of operational practice on Participating Organisations (including Regional Electricity Companies) on the use of Switchgear and Cowans RA4 oil switches and associated switchgear. The types affected are RAE4, RA6, RAE6 & RAO4.

12. We have been advised that the manufacturers Switchgear and Cowans were acquired by English Electric and then closed. English Electric subsequently became part of the GEC group of companies during the early 1970s, and is now part of GEC Alsthom. GEC Alsthom are unable to supply any spare parts for Switchgear and Cowans switchgear.

13. It is quite clear that any Switchgear and Cowans switchgear on the MOD Estate is at least twenty five years old and probably over thirty years old. It would have been installed by the former Property Services Agency (PSA) against a predicted working life of 25 years for outdoor switchgear and 30 years for indoor switchgear. (Former PSA M&E Cost Planning Guide - Engineering Economics and Cost in Use Volume 3 Table 4.2 refers).

14. In view of the age of this switchgear and the lack of availability of spare parts, it is envisaged that this prohibition will never be lifted. This switchgear must, therefore, be considered as at the end of, or beyond the end of, its useful economic life and replaced.

END OF SAFETY NOTICE