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# Examiners' Report

## NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

### UNIT IB: INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF HAZARDOUS AGENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

**JANUARY 2020**

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# Introduction

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NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) was formed in 1979 as an independent examining board and awarding body with charitable status. We offer a comprehensive range of globally-recognised, vocationally-related qualifications designed to meet the health, safety, environmental and risk management needs of all places of work in both the private and public sectors.

Courses leading to NEBOSH qualifications attract around 50,000 learners annually and are offered by over 600 Learning Partners, with examinations taken in over 120 countries around the world. Our qualifications are recognised by the relevant professional membership bodies including the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM).

NEBOSH is an awarding body that applies best practice setting, assessment and marking and applies to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation regulatory requirements.

This report provides guidance for learners and Learning Partners for use in preparation for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content and the application of assessment criteria.

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## General comments

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Many learners are well prepared for this unit assessment and provide comprehensive and relevant answers in response to the demands of the question paper. This includes the ability to demonstrate understanding of knowledge by applying it to workplace situations.

There are other learners, however, who appear to be unprepared for the unit assessment and who show both a lack of knowledge of the syllabus content and a lack of understanding of how key concepts should be applied to workplace situations, which is an essential requirement at Diploma level.

This report has been prepared to provide feedback on the standard date examination sitting in January 2020.

Feedback is presented in these key areas: responses to questions, examination technique and command words and is designed to assist learners and Learning Partners prepare for future assessments in this unit.

Learners and Learning Partners will also benefit from use of the 'Guide to the NEBOSH International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for Unit IB and tutor reference documents for each Element.

Additional guidance on command words is provided in 'Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers' which is also available via the NEBOSH website.

## Unit IB

### International control of hazardous agents in the workplace

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- Question 1** Workers driving vehicles on a large construction site have reported back pain caused by exposure to whole body vibration (WBV).
- (a) **Outline** control measures that could minimise the workers' exposure to WBV. (7)
- (b) **Outline** other possible work-related causes of the back pain being experienced by these workers. (3)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 6.6: Explain the effects of vibration on the individual; 6.8 Explain the principles and methods of controlling vibration and vibration exposure; and 9.1: Outline types, causes and relevant workplace examples of injuries and ill-health conditions associated with repetitive physical activities, manual handling and poor posture.

In part (a) learners did not provide sufficient detail within their answers for an 'outline'. Points such as 'job rotation or regular breaks' were given; however, marks could not be awarded because learners did not to expand their answers to add 'away from driving the vehicle' which would have shown their depth of knowledge. Additionally 'maintenance' without qualification of this being of the seat or vehicle suspension, and 'training' without the additional point of what the drivers should be trained in, meant learners did not gain marks.

In part (b), as with part (a), learners did not outline their answers and instead provided limited responses without clarification, such as being involved in repetitive work would lead to back pain.

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- Question 2** **Outline** reasons why respiratory protective equipment (RPE) may not provide the level of protection that is stated by the manufacturer when it is being used. (10)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.4: Explain the effectiveness of various types of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the factors to consider in selection of PPE.

This question was answered well and generally learners were able to provide good reasons to support why the RPE did not provide the level of protection stated by the manufacturer. These included inadequate training for the user, incompatibility with other PPE and incorrect cartridges.

Those learners who listed potential reasons rather than outlining why those reasons would affect the protection factor did not gain marks. The same was true for learners who assumed the question was asking what to consider when selecting the appropriate type of PPE. This could have been due to being unsure of how to answer the question being asked.

Few learners outlined the reliability of protection factors or did not consider that the type of RPE might be 'powered RPE' and therefore the protection levels could be reduced because hoses were too long or batteries low.



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- Question 5** Workers are exposed to high levels of heat and steam from a manufacturing process.
- (a) **Identify TWO** parameters that could be *measured* when making an assessment of the thermal environment. (2)
- (b) **Outline** ways of reducing thermal stress among workers during the manufacturing process. (8)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 10.1: Explain the need for, and factors involved in, the provision and maintenance of temperature in both moderate and extreme thermal environments.

Part (a) attracted a wide range of answers relating to temperature and humidity, indicating variable understanding of this topic. Many learners were not able to identify two of the possible four environmental parameters which are named in the syllabus under learning outcome 10.1. Answers with insufficient accuracy such as simply stating humidity or temperature did not gain the marks available.

Part (b) was better answered and most learners were able to cover a sufficient number of ways of reducing thermal stress and gain marks. However, some learners still lacked the breadth of answers and depth of knowledge and some strayed into discussing how to reduce noise and vibration in the workplace, rather than staying on the topic of thermal stress. Appropriate ways to reduce thermal stress include providing ventilation or de-humidifiers in the workplace and ensuring water or fluids are available.

There were some missed opportunities to gain marks with vague answers such as 'wear appropriate clothing' where they should have mentioned lightweight or breathable and 'reduce the steam in the workplace' without qualifying that this could be achieved by switching off un-wanted heat sources. Other common answers were to enclose the process or locate the personnel in an air-conditioned control room, which were really changing the scope of the question.

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- Question 6** An organisation is considering the substitution of a chemical it currently uses, for an alternative one.
- Outline** what should be considered when assessing the risk of using a new chemical. (10)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.3: Outline the factors to consider when undertaking assessment and evaluation of risks from hazardous substances.

Answers to this question lacked the breadth of knowledge required to gain good marks. Many learners, rather than focusing on the topic and the question, chose to model their answer around the hierarchy of controls which led to limited responses. Learners did not outline their answers and instead listed or identified considerations such as storage, disposal and emergency arrangements without putting these into context.

Some learners approached the question as a comparison with an existing chemical, rather than an assessment for using a new chemical from basic principles, as identified in the question. This meant that they assumed the current chemical was safe and adequately controlled, so only considered additional controls and procedures to those already in place.

Good responses included considerations such as information contained in the material safety data sheet and identification of susceptible workers, giving examples such as pregnant women and young persons.

**Question 7**

Workers in a large manufacturing organisation are exposed to a solvent by inhalation, throughout their 8-hour shift.

- (a) (i) Use the data in the table below to **calculate** the 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) exposure to a solvent for a worker. *Your answer should include the detail of calculation to show your understanding of how the exposure is determined.* (7)

Working period (Total shift time = 8 hours)	Tasks carried out by worker	Exposure to solvent (ppm)
08.00 – 10.30	Weighing ingredients	140
10.30 – 10.45	Break	0
10.45 – 12.45	Charging the mixers	100
12.45 – 13.45	Lunch	0
13.45 – 15.45	Cleaning equipment	25
15.45 – 16.00	Assisting maintenance staff	0
Assuming that exposure is zero during all other times.		
Also assume that a legally enforceable exposure limit (8-hour time-weighted average (TWA)) of 100ppm is applicable to the solvent.		

- (ii) The organisation decides to change the working patterns so that each worker does a single task for a 12-hour shift. A worker is assigned to the task of charging the mixers for their 12-hour shift. Within the shift, they are allowed two 45-minute breaks where their exposure is assumed to be zero.
- Using this information and the relevant data above, **calculate** the 8-hour TWA exposure for this worker. (2)
- (iii) **Outline** the legal implications of this change in the working pattern. (2)
- (b) The occupational health department at the organisation needs to decide whether to carry out health surveillance for workers exposed to this solvent.
- (i) **Outline** the purposes of health surveillance. (4)
- (ii) **Identify ONE** type of health surveillance that may be appropriate for the workers using this solvent. (1)
- (iii) *Other than* health surveillance, **identify FOUR** functions that may be carried out by an occupational health service in a large manufacturing organisation. (4)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 4.1: Explain how occupational exposure limits are used in the workplace; 4.2: Outline the methods for sampling of airborne contaminants; and 1.3: Outline the management of occupational health (including the practical and legal aspects).

This question was answered well and the majority obtained full marks. In parts (a) (i) and (ii) the correct methodologies were applied to the calculation and where marks were not awarded these were for simple mathematical errors, most had left out the zero exposure periods from their calculation. It is important to include the detail of the calculation to show the methodology is understood. It is also necessary to remember that the number answer requires units, for it to have meaning and be given marks. In this case the units were ppm. On recalculating for a 12-hour day shift some learners were not able to show exposure recalculated for the required 8-hour time period and instead they divided by 12 and arrived at falsely low exposure.

In part (a) (iii) most learners identified that the exposure limit had changed with the change to the working pattern and the exposure was now above the workplace exposure limit (WEL). However, few referred to the need to introduce additional control measures. Learners should take note of the marks awarded for the individual parts of the question to provide guidance to the depth or breadth of answer required.

In part (b) (i) the focus of the question moved to the occupational health department deciding whether to carry out health surveillance for workers exposed to the solvent. Responses to this part were limited, again due to the lack of depth required for an 'outline' command word. However, some learners outlined that alerting workers to the early signs of health problems and whether the existing control measures are adequate were relevant purposes. Many learners listed the functions of an occupational health specialist or department, which was not appropriate.

Learners were able to identify one type of health surveillance for part (b) (ii) without difficulty; lung function tests and medical surveillance being the most common answers.

Many learners gained good marks for part (b) (iii). However, as some had already outlined health surveillance functions in part (b) (i) they had difficulty understanding what was required for this part of the question. There were a wide range of possible functions including counselling and first-aid training.

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**Question 8**

A large livestock farm employs a number of people who are involved in caring for animals, cleaning out animal enclosures and disposing of waste materials.

During such work workers may be exposed to zoonoses.

- (a) **Give** the meaning of the term 'zoonose'. (2)
- (b) **Outline** how and when the farm workers are likely to be exposed to:
- (i) cryptosporidiosis; (3)
- (ii) leptospirosis. (3)
- (c) **Outline** a range of practical control measures that should be used to minimise the risks associated with exposure to zoonoses. (10)
- (d) **Identify TWO other** zoonoses that workers working on the farm could be exposed to. (2)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 5.1: Explain the types and properties of biological agents found at work; and 5.2: Explain the assessment and control of risk from deliberate and non-deliberate exposure to biological agents at work.

This question was not very well answered and learners did not gain many marks. This seemed to be mainly because they lacked accurate knowledge of the two zoonoses concerned, so gained very few marks relating to outlining the mechanisms for disease transmission. This was then compounded by difficulties in suggesting appropriate specific control measures as they had not appreciated the scenarios in which transmission could occur.

In part (a) the meaning of the term 'zoonose' was not well answered, with only a very few learner gaining more than one of the two marks available. In most cases, marks were only awarded for describing the spread of disease from animals to humans. Few learners stated that the disease will cause ill-health in humans but not necessarily in the animal.



In part (b) (i) only a few learners gained more than two marks. There appeared to be confusion with leptospirosis or Legionnaires' disease as some learners suggested that rat urine and stagnant water was the source of the disease.

In part (b) (ii) many learners outlined that rat urine, broken skin, cuts and grazes were all possible routes of entry. Few proposed urine splashes to the eyes or the inhalation of droplets of urine are a means of transmission.

There was a mixed response to part (c) of the question. However, this is where most learners gained the majority of marks. A common pitfall was to relate this part of the question to cryptosporidiosis or leptospirosis, rather than to zoonoses generally. Practical control measures outlined included the need for good personal hygiene, separate hand washing facilities and hand washing particularly before eating or drinking.

Responses to part (d) were limited with some learners being able to identify psittacosis but most were unable to identify a further zoonose, only gaining one mark of the two available.

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<b>Question 9</b>	(a) <b>Identify</b> possible health effects from exposure to ionising radiation.	<b>(5)</b>
	(b) <b>Outline</b> control measures that should be in place where workers may be exposed to ionising radiation.	<b>(15)</b>

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 7.3: Outline the effects of exposure to ionising radiation, its measurement and control.

Part (a) was answered well with learners identifying both short and long term health effects from exposure to ionising radiation such as hair loss and cancer induction, respectively.

Many learners were familiar with the concepts of time, distance and shielding. However, as the question asked learners to outline the control measures those concepts needed to be qualified, for example reduce the time the workers are exposed to ionising radiation, to gain marks. Further control measures included the need for inventory control of radiation sources, reference to designating individuals as Classified Persons and having appropriate emergency plans in place. Although a minority recognised the need for informed and professional advice, very few could correctly identify the roles and titles of the RPS or RPA.

Those learners who did not gain high marks for this question were generally lacking in knowledge and consequently giving short answers. For example 'provide PPE' and 'provide training', both without qualification of what type of PPE or training would be required in this scenario. Some learners also repeated themselves several times, where marks could only be awarded once.

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**Question 10** Managers are concerned at the increase in stress-related absence.

- (a) **Identify** a range of information sources that can be used to assess the levels of stress experienced by their workers. (6)
- (b) **Outline** organisational and personal factors that can contribute to work-related stress. (14)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 8.1: Explain the effects and causes of common types of mental ill-health within the workplace; and 8.2: Explain the identification and control of workplace mental ill-health with reference to relevant standards.

Part (a) required learners to identify information sources used to assess the levels of stress experienced by the workers. Learners are reminded to pay attention to the number of marks available for each part of the question, as some learners provided two or three different information sources rather than providing more to gain further marks. Furthermore, it is important to also note the command word as some learners gave long answers despite the command word for this part asking them to 'identify' sources.

A variety of terms were used for performance appraisals, return-to-work interviews and staff questionnaires. All of those demonstrated that the learner understood the requirement of the question and marks were awarded. Some learners lacked context in their answers providing responses such as 'accidents' or 'discussions' when further details were needed.

In part (b) many learners opted to sub-divide their answers into organisational factors and individual factors. Other learners conversant with HSE's Stress Management Standards chose to answer under the six topic headings of the document (Demand, Control, Support, Relationship, Role and Change) and both approaches made for ordered answers.

The main difficulty with awarding marks was the lack of detail that is required for an 'outline' command word. A number of learners briefly listed or used bullet points, which did not provide sufficient detail to be worthy of marks.

There are a wide range of factors that can contribute to work-related stress and most learners outlined the threat of redundancy, difficult shift patterns, excessive competition between colleagues and a poor working environment.

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- Question 11** Farmers, veterinary workers and sheep shearers often need to manually handle live animals such as sheep or goats as part of their work. In these situations the *load* is the live animal.
- (a) **Describe** what, associated with the *load*, increases the risk from these manual handling activities. (4)
  - (b) **Outline** what should be considered when carrying out manual handling risk assessments in these situations. (6)
  - (c) **Outline** practical control measures that could be used in these situations to help reduce the risk of a manual handling injury. (10)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 9.1: Outline types, causes and relevant workplace examples of injuries and ill-health conditions associated with repetitive physical activities, manual handling and poor posture; and 9.2: Explain the assessment and control of risks from repetitive activities, manual handling and poor posture.

This question was not well answered. This could be due to learners not relating the answers they provided to the scenario in the question and instead providing general manual handling responses.

In part (a) some learners did not focus on hazards relating to the load and instead also considered hazards relating to the environment, task or individual. These were not required. Many did not respond to the phrase in the question 'in these situations' and gave theoretical answers not relating to the scenario given. However, some learners recognised the scenario and that the nature of the animal is likely to be unpredictable as it is a 'live' load, in addition to the animal being heavy.

Answers to part (b) lacked. Some learners used the TILE principle to outline what should be considered when carrying out a manual handling risk assessment and included that the individuals need training, the task involves twisting and the working environment is potentially slippery.

In part (c) very few learners appeared to have a practical or theoretical understanding of dealing with animals in the context of the question. Those who did outlined the possibility of avoiding manual handling or use of a variety of mechanical aids and physical restraints such as pens and gates. A few outlined that the design of the layout of the workplace could have a bearing on greater efficiency of lifting and handling of the animals. In this context, there was the option of using platforms to raise the animal. There was little or no appreciation of a need to select breeds that behaved in a more docile fashion. It was more common for learners to suggest that docility in the animal could be induced by means of sedation.

## **Examination technique**

The following examination techniques are consistently identified as the main areas in need of improvement for learners:

### **Learners misread/misinterpreted the question**

Careful and thorough preparation for the examination is vital for learners. Learning Partners should assist learners in setting out and applying sound revision and examination practice and preparation techniques to ensure that they are well prepared for the examination. This includes ensuring that learners carefully read the question to determine exactly what is being asked and answer accordingly.

Examiners noted that there was evidence of learners not understanding the question that was asked and therefore providing an answer that was not relevant to the question.

The range of English language skills demonstrated in the examination by learners varies enormously. Examiners often find themselves faced with scripts where learners do not appear to have understood the question and struggle to write a coherent answer in English. Learners for this examination should satisfy the required IELTS Level 7 language requirements. Learning Partners are reminded that it is incumbent on them to provide appropriate advice and guidance to learners to help ensure that they stand a reasonable chance of success in the study of the NEBOSH Diploma.

There were numerous examples of quite long, detailed answers that suggest practical experience but do not focus on the question being asked. This may be a result of learners either not reading the question properly, or because of possible language issues where learners do not understand what the question is asking.

The examination is assessing learners on their understanding of 'managing' health and safety and a number of learners did not seem to grasp this resulting in long, detailed answers on such issues as 'what to look for in an audit' rather than how to prepare for and manage an audit.

Examiners ask questions based on the syllabus. Points, no matter how valid, but unrelated to the question being asked, will not attract any marks. Learners should note that where there is emphasis in a question (eg by the use of italics) it is to guide learners towards a particular point. Reading and re-reading the question encompasses taking due note of this emphasis.

### **Learners' handwriting was illegible**

The examination situation is a stressful time for learners and while the examination is not a test of the English language or handwriting, scripts must be legible for Examiners to mark them fairly. As the examination progresses, learners can become both mentally and physically tired. In an increasingly electronic age, professional people do not have the same need to write text in longhand. However, to pass this examination it is an essential and necessary part of the preparation to rehearse writing questions in full and in the time allocated.

When practicing examination technique, learners should hand-write their answers and get feedback from their Learning Partners on legibility (as well as how they performed).

Learning Partners need to identify those learners whose handwriting is illegible and provide them with appropriate advice. Examiners cannot award marks for answers that they are unable to read.

### **Learners unnecessarily wrote the question down**

There are 15 minutes to answer a 10-mark question in Section A and 30 minutes available to answer a 20-mark question in Section B of the question paper. This time will be required for reading, re-reading and understanding the question, developing an answer plan on the answer booklet and finally committing the answer to the answer booklet. The efficient use of time is essential in order to answer the 9 questions within the 3 hours available. The majority of Examiners reported that learners felt it necessary to write the question out in full, before providing the associated answer, and this limits the time available. Learning Partners should remind learners that it is not necessary to include a question with their answer.

Good examination technique is followed where the learner frames the answer in the context of the question, rather than rewriting the whole of the question. As with the other examination technique points above, good examination technique is developed through practice and good preparation.

### **Learners repeated the same point but in different ways**

In some cases learners tended to make the same point more than once, eg training. Once a valid point has been made and the mark awarded Examiners will not be able to award the mark again. Unless otherwise stated, most questions require learners to respond with a wide range of issues to gain high marks. Consequently learners should take care when using terms that contain numerous points that should be made separately.

Learning Partners should brief learners on examination technique by way of understanding what points are mark worthy in an answer and those that are not.

### **Learners did not respond effectively to the command word**

A key indicator in an examination question will be the command word, which is always given in **bold** typeface. The command word will indicate the depth of answer that is expected by the learner.

Generally, there has been an improvement in response to command words, but a number of learners continue to produce answers that are little more than a list even when the command word requires a more detailed level of response, such as 'outline' or 'explain'. This is specifically addressed in the following section dealing with command words, most commonly failure to provide sufficient content to constitute an 'outline' was noted. Failure to respond to the relevant command word in context was also a frequent problem hence information inappropriate to the question was often given.

Course exercises should guide learners to assessing the relevant points in any given scenario such that they are able to apply the relevant syllabus elements within the command word remit.

### **Learners provided rote-learned responses that did not fit the question**

Examiners report a high incidence of learners writing down answers they have memorised from previous Examiners' Reports. These answers often relate to a similar, but different question, to which the memorised answer is not wholly applicable. For example, it may require a different aspect of the topic or relate to a different scenario.

Learners are expected to apply their knowledge and understanding to the actual question given, not the question they think they see. This is why it is extremely important that learners understand and are able to apply their knowledge, and not just memorise. Learning Partners should help learners apply their knowledge to a range of different scenarios to aid understanding of the topic.

### **Learners did not allocate enough time to the question**

Some learners were unable to give answers of sufficient depth to warrant good marks and sometimes spent more time on questions carrying fewer marks than was warranted by the command word.

Learners need to take note of the fact that answers in Section A are worth 10 marks and those in Section B are worth 20 marks. The Examiners' expectation is that more detailed answers are required in Section B. Some learners spend a disproportionate amount of time in writing long answers to Section A questions at the expense of time spent on the more in-depth answers demanded in Section B. Proper preparation and 'mock' examinations can help to correct this.

Learning Partners should ensure that learners are given adequate opportunity to develop examination skills to ensure that answers are provided to the depth and breadth required.

## **Structured Answers**

It is important for learners to structure their answers as this helps cover all the requirements of the question without losing focus. It is good examination technique to look for the principles or the concepts that underpin the topic and to use those as a basis for delivering a structured answer.

## **Learners answered by posing a question**

Learners need to resist the temptation to present their answers as merely a series of questions. 'Outline' requires learners *'To indicate the principal features or different parts of'* and this is not done through posing questions to the Examiners.

## Command words

Please note that the examples used here are for the purpose of explanation only.

The following command words are listed in the order identified as being the most challenging for learners:

### Outline

*Outline: To indicate the principal features or different parts of.*

Most learners are familiar with the requirements of 'outline'. However, a number of learners expect that by listing or giving bullet points that will be sufficient. At this level of qualification learners are expected to be able to construct sentences around their answers.

An 'outline' question requires learners to give the main issue and then provide the key features in the context of the question. Where a question that requires learners to '**outline** the issues to be addressed in the development of an audit system' the response should provide adequate context to the issues in order to gain the marks. An answer that merely includes issues such as 'scope, training, commitment, etc' will not gain good marks since while the issues are relevant there is no context to the issues in relation to the question asked.

Learners should provide context to the point being made to demonstrate understanding of the subject.

As required by a Diploma level qualification learners should be able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the subject matter and therefore be able to summarise and contextualise technical points in the field of health and safety. Those learners who did provide good outlines to questions demonstrated understanding of the topic without going into too much detail.

If asked to '**outline** the purpose of local exhaust ventilation' in a given scenario, an answer such as 'contaminant removal, exposure limits' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, removal of contaminant at source (as far as possible) and ensuring exposure limits are not exceeded would higher gain marks.

If asked to '**outline** how health risks from exposure to lead should be managed...' in a given scenario, an answer such as medical tests, PPE, RPE would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, surveillance tests for lead in blood/urine, the use of PPE such as overalls, the use of RPE such as respirator with appropriate particulate/fume filters would gain marks.

### Explain

*Explain: To provide an understanding. To make an idea or relationship clear.*

Many learners are still not properly prepared for this command word. A list of points (no matter how relevant) will not satisfy Examiners when the command word is 'explain'. So for example, where learners were asked to explain the circumstances where heat and smoke detectors would be inappropriate, Examiners were looking for learners to explain that heat detectors would be inappropriate in environments where temperatures fluctuate suddenly during normal work activities. Just saying 'workshops', for example, is not enough to provide an answer to an 'explain' question.

Commonly, learners do not provide adequate detail in relation to this command word, eg '**explain** limitations of relying on accident numbers only as a measure of health and safety performance'. An appropriate response would provide the reader with reasons why relying solely on accident numbers would not provide a comprehensive view of the organisational performance in health and safety, eg accident numbers do not indicate incidence of ill-health and accident data may go up following initiatives following underreporting, etc.

Learners are generally unable to provide clear answers where this command word is used but that may be due to lack of knowledge rather than not understanding what is required, since an explanation requires the learner to provide reasoning for their answer. For example, when a question specifies 'explain' the learner is required to provide an understanding or make clear an idea or relationship. For example 'explain how malaria is transmitted to humans'. If a learner responded with *mosquito bites humans* this would be insufficient to merit full marks as this does not provide a deep enough understanding or relationship from the specified command word or the context in which the question is asked. However, a learner would get full marks if they elaborated on this stating that the disease originates with the plasmodium parasite that is then transmitted to humans via a bite from a feeding female mosquito that carries it; the parasite then transferring to the human blood stream, travelling to the liver.

## **Describe**

*'Describe. To give a detailed written account of the distinctive features of a subject. The account should be factual without any attempt to explain.'*

Learners are required to provide a word picture in response to this command word and therefore the learner needs to have a good understanding of the subject of the question in the examination in order to gain good marks. Typically, a limited response to this command word will be an inadequate amount of detail in the answer.

For example, when asked to describe the contents of a safety policy learners should provide the Examiner with relevant information about the contents of the policy, eg 'the policy should contain details of the organisational commitment to health and safety'. This would be supported with specific targets and commitment resource to ensuring compliance as a minimum but developing the health and wellbeing of the employees, etc'. An answer that goes no further than listing the subjects of to be covered in the policy would not attract good marks in the examination.

In the examination, lists and single word answers will rarely satisfy the requirement of the Examiners in terms of answering the question at this level. It is noticeable that the well prepared learner has less trouble deciphering command words and tends to gain good marks whereas those learners who use single word answers will tend not to have the knowledge to write anything further in the context that is required.

## **Give**

*Give: Only a short answer is required, not an explanation or a description.*

'Give' is normally used in conjunction with a further requirement, such as '**give** the meaning of' or '**give** an example in **EACH** case'.

In some circumstances learners may spend too much time giving unrequired detail in response to this command word. It is often used in conjunction with the meaning of a phrase or statement and learners can over-elaborate the required answer. Time management is important in the examination and learners should ensure that they respond with appropriate brevity where the command word and available marks suggest that is all that is required.

When asked to '**give** the meaning of motivation', it would appropriate to say that 'motivation is the driving force that leads an individual to behave in a certain way'. It would not be appropriate to discuss in detail different motivational theories.

On the whole most learners respond well to this command word, often by offering a definition. There is evidence where learners go into too much detail that left those learners writing large amounts of text for very few marks.



## **Identify**

*Identify: To give a reference to an item, which could be its name or title.*

As with 'give' above it is not uncommon for learners to over-elaborate their answers in response to this command word. It is adequate for a learner to provide the key point to the Examiner without further developing the point with supporting theory or examples unless they are specifically asked for.

When providing a response to 'identify' the mental selection and naming of an answer that relates to the question should be sufficient. In most cases, one or two words would be sufficient to be awarded corresponding marks. Any further detail would not be required and impacts negatively on the time limit for completing the examination. For example, if the question was '**identify** possible effects on the body when someone is exposed to lead' suitable responses would include developmental effects in unborn babies, anaemia, nausea/vomiting in order to be awarded a mark.

For additional guidance, please see NEBOSH's '*Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers*' document, which is available on our website: <https://www.nebosh.org.uk/i-am/a-learner/> - from this page the document can be found by clicking on the relevant Qualification link, then on the 'Resources' tab.