

**NEWSVIEW**

## Sharp focus on safety

IN A world where Green increasingly becomes the watchword, there has never been a time when health and safety so occupied the public mind, whether on global or more localised scale. Safety matters feature in reports (both official and unofficial), newspaper and television stories — and it is inevitable that some concern the Services, including the Royal Navy.

Stories emerging can sometimes appear somewhat over the top or off beam, yet no-one denies the importance of the subject.

The latest stories concerning the Navy have involved nuclear submarine safety, as well as a housing estate which was built many years ago in an area where waste toxic material was dumped.

### **'Not compromised'**

As far as submarines are concerned, the Navy was quick to offer reassurance, with a particular eye on submariners and their families. "The safety of nuclear submarines and the personnel who serve and work in them has always been of the greatest importance to the MOD and the RN," it was stated. "Every effort is made to ensure that safety standards are not compromised."

The message went on, "All our nuclear-powered submarines, including the Polaris force, continue to operate and are maintained in accordance with rigorous safety standards and with the endorsement of the Nuclear-Powered Warship Safety Committee.

"We would not allow any submarine to go to sea unless we considered it safe to do so. Those concerned may equally be assured that stringent safety standards also apply to radiation dose limits for personnel working on nuclear submarines."

### **Big advances**

Meanwhile, in a Portsmouth saga with a long and involved background, there was swift action to offer rehousing to married quarters tenants at Eastney when the potential dangers of a former waste dump featured in a scientists' report. As further tests in the area proceeded, some tenants have already taken up the offer.

In such situations recrimination and the wisdom of hindsight is an easy option. Without commenting on the pros and cons of building on that site years ago, it should be remembered that recent years have seen huge advances in knowledge, public safety awareness, and expectations. Doubtless new generations will find unacceptable some of the standards we set today.