



OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

Fire safety in UNMIL

UNMIL does not have a fire safety policy, and its fire safety programme and evacuation plans do not conform to the relevant standards

22 December 2009

Assignment No. AP2009/626/10

United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE

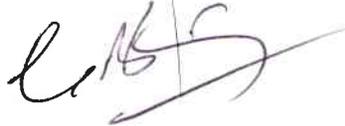
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Ms. Ellen Margarethe Løj
A: Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Mission in Liberia

DATE: 22 December 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09- **03252**

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Acting Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2009/626/10 - Audit of fire safety in UNMIL**

OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we will close recommendation 6 in the OIOS recommendations database as indicated in Annex 1. In order for us to close the remaining recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendations 5 and 11) in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. Stephen Lieberman, Director of Mission Support, UNMIL
Ms. Annette Leijenaar, Chief Security Advisor, UNMIL
Mr. Kwame Lare, OIC, Fire Safety Unit, UNMIL
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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

FUNCTION

“The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations of external oversight bodies, undertake management audits, reviews and surveys to improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of fire safety in UNMIL

OIOS conducted an audit of fire safety in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the fire safety and prevention measures in place in UNMIL. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The Mission was implementing fire safety and prevention measures. However, there is a need for improvement as follows:

- UNMIL does not have a fire safety policy, and the Mission's fire safety programme does not take into account the Liberian Fire Code requirements. The lack of a fire safety policy and related guidelines may result in ineffective measures being taken for the prevention of fires;
- Fire safety efforts in activities such as welding, building alterations and installation of fire alert systems were not well coordinated with the Fire Safety Unit. This was in contravention of safety requirements;
- Evacuation plans for all facilities had not been developed in compliance with the relevant standards. There is thus the risk of ineffective evacuation of staff in the event of fire, increasing the possibility of damage to property and loss of lives;
- Fire and safety surveys were not conducted for all facilities of UNMIL, including high risk areas such as cooking facilities, garages, and fuel storage areas;
- The UNMIL Fuel Unit had an inadequate emergency response plan. Moreover, insufficient security and the proximity of the fuel storage area to the power house increased the risk of an industrial fire; and
- Firefighters were not provided with regular training. There was thus inadequate capacity in the Mission for containing fires.

OIOS made several recommendations to address the deficiencies found during the audit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Paragraphs
I. INTRODUCTION	1-6
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES	7
III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	8
IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
A. Policies and Procedures	9-18
B. Fire Safety Programme	19-37
C. Capacity and Training	38-47
V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	48
ANNEX 1 – Status of audit recommendations	

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of fire safety in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
2. The draft Fire Safety Guidelines (FSG) of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) provide the framework for fire services based on the International Fire Codes (IFC).
3. The Fire Safety Unit (FSU) in UNMIL is responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and controlling proactive measures and activities to be implemented by the Mission. The main responsibilities of the FSU include responding to fire emergencies, conducting fire safety surveys and inspections at all UN facilities, and organizing fire prevention training. The FSU has one international and 25 national staff members. The 2008-2009 budget of the FSU for material and supplies was \$897,000.
4. Firefighting services in UNMIL are provided by the FSU for facilities in Monrovia and sector locations. Since August 2005, the aviation fire service at James Spriggs Payne Airport (JSPA) has been outsourced to the Liberia Domestic Airports Agency (LDAA) under a general support service memorandum of understanding (MOU). Under the outsourced agreement, UNMIL is responsible for providing firefighting equipment and acquiring firefighting agents, protective clothing and other materials while the contractor provides fully trained firefighters.
5. According to the Security Information Coordination Unit (SICU), there were 58 recorded fires during the period from July 2008 to June 2009.
6. Comments made by UNMIL are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

7. The main objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the fire safety and prevention measures in place in UNMIL, and more specifically to assess:
 - (a) Compliance with relevant policies and procedures; and
 - (b) Adequacy of training, education and awareness activities.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The audit covered the period from June 2008 to July 2009. The audit methodology included: (a) a review of relevant records; (b) interviews with key personnel; and (c) visits to major facilities in Monrovia and Gbarnga to assess the measures put in place.
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IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Policies and procedures

9. According to the FSG, each organization should have a clear fire safety policy, and the host country prevention codes, regulations and rules take precedence in the development and implementation of any UN fire safety programme.

10. UNMIL does not have a fire safety policy and relies on the directions of its Fire Safety Officer (FSO) and staff in other sections such as the Engineering Section. However, the Mission has a fire safety programme, but the programme does not take into account, and UNMIL does not have a copy of, the provisions of the Liberian Fire Code (LFC). Instead, the FSU followed the IFC that, in its opinion, is superior to the LFC.

11. During the period covered by the audit, there were 13 reported electrical fires. As per the SICU record of fires, 6 of the 13 fires were caused by overheated electrical wires. Despite the frequency of electrical fires, UNMIL does not have a guideline to prevent or minimize electrical fires.

12. The lack of a fire safety policy and related guidelines may result in ineffective measures being taken for the prevention of fires.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should promulgate a fire safety policy and programme in compliance with the Fire Safety Guidelines.

13. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 1 and stated that a team from New York recently visited UNMIL to help establish a fire safety policy for the Mission. FSU is waiting for these guidelines which will form the basis of UNMIL fire policy guidelines. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of the new fire safety policy.*

Fire safety coordination

14. Paragraph 2.1.12 of the FSU Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) requires the FSU to work with various sections/units of the Mission as necessary, including the Engineering, Facilities Management, Supply, Environmental Safety, and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), to reduce fire hazards. The efforts shall be cooperative and focus on prevention through proper planning and engineering.

15. There were indications of a lack of proper coordination as explained below:

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- The OHS and FSU introduced a Hot Works Permit System in October 2008 for activities that involve welding, burning and grinding. Prior to starting any of these activities, they need to be approved by the FSU. This was not being done systematically.
 - The FSG requires the FSO to work closely with the Engineering Section to ensure that all proposals to construct or modify premises have adequate fire safety protection measures included in their designs. However, the FSU does not have a fire safety work permit arrangement with the Engineering Section. Therefore, building alterations did not comply with the relevant fire safety requirements. For example, a partition erected on the seventh floor of the Mission Headquarters did not conform to the relevant fire safety requirements.
 - Following an electrical fire in February 2009 at the Communications and Information Technology Section (CITS) centre in Greenville, a fire alert system was commissioned and is being installed at other CITS centres in the Mission. The FSU did not have any input in establishing the system nor were they aware of the system.
 - The site board process, which requires a fire plan to protect the installation once it has been commissioned, was not in place.
 - The FSU's advice was not sought prior to the construction of the UNMIL fuel installation. Failure to seek the advice of the FSU violates Section 5.2.4 of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)/Department of Field Support (DFS) Fuel Operations Manual.

16. Uncoordinated fire safety measures may be ineffective in preventing fire or mitigating fire hazards as there is little or no consistency in the application of control mechanisms amongst the various section/units.

Recommendations 2 and 3

The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should:

- (2) Ensure that the Fire Safety Unit coordinates the fire safety efforts of the various sections/units of the Mission on the implementation of fire safety measures; and**
- (3) Require all sections/units of the Mission to obtain mandatory clearance from the Fire Safety Unit prior to commencing construction of facilities with a potentially high level of fire hazards.**

17. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it has put in place measures to ensure that efforts are well coordinated This will be formalized in the UNMIL Fire Safety Policy. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of the new fire safety policy.*

18. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the fire safety policy being developed will address this matter. Also, the DSS Fire Safety Draft Guidelines include guidelines to be followed during construction or new occupancy. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the new fire safety policy.*

B. Fire safety programme

Evacuation plan

19. Section 404.2 of the IFC requires the UN to maintain fire safety and evacuation plans for all buildings. According to the FSG, the purpose of an evacuation plan is to ensure a safe and orderly evacuation of facilities in the event of fire or other emergency. The FSG states the Fire Safety Plan (FSP) should contain details of the actions to be taken in response to a fire and spell out the roles and responsibilities of staff members.

20. UNMIL's FSP needs to include an evacuation plan for all facilities. Additionally, the evacuation route and the assembly point for the Mission Headquarters are located in close proximity to the UNMIL fuel station within the compound. This may pose a risk to the safety of staff in case of fire.

21. A fire warden system has been established for the Mission Headquarters and other buildings in Monrovia, but there were some weaknesses in the system. For example, there was no mechanism for ensuring that a warden is always available, and the wardens list included two ex-UNMIL staff members and six staff members who frequently travel outside the Mission area on official business. The absence of fire wardens could impede the orderly evacuation of staff in the event of fire.

22. The inadequacies in the FSP and evacuation plan combined with inadequate monitoring of staff movement may impede coordination during an emergency, increasing the risk of damage to property and loss of life.

Recommendation 4

(4) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit develops evacuation plans for all premises in compliance with the International Fire Codes and Fire Safety Guidelines.

23. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 4 and stated that an FSP covering all facilities will be developed. Additionally, the FSU will submit recommendations on assembly points to the Office of Mission Support after the completion of a fire survey of all facilities is conducted. Lastly, updates to the list of wardens are performed periodically and before major evacuation drills. Recommendation 4 remains open pending: (a) receipt of the FSP covering all facilities; (b) confirmation that there has been a change in the assembly point at the Mission Headquarters; and (c) receipt of an updated fire warden list.*

Fire risk assessment

24. According to the FSG, every building or office occupied by the Organization is required to have a current, written fire safety risk assessment. The Fire Marshal of the Mission is responsible for conducting fire and safety surveys at all UN facilities in Liberia. Following completion of the survey, the Designated Fire Safety Official is required to conduct an assessment to identify existing or potential risks and to determine areas that need improvement.

25. Fire and safety surveys were not conducted for high risk areas such as the cooking facilities (including the one located in the basement of the Mission Headquarters), Fuel Unit, Transport Garage and CITS (server rooms and data centers). The absence of a fire safety risk assessment precludes the Mission from identifying the vulnerabilities of its facilities and increases the risk of fire hazards.

Recommendation 5

(5) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Designated Fire Safety Official maintains a current and written fire safety risk assessment for UNMIL facilities.

26. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 5 and stated that a fire safety risk assessment will be conducted for facilities deemed as higher risk of fire.* Recommendation 5 remains open pending confirmation of the conduct of fire safety risk assessments for all high risk areas.

Aviation Unit fire safety

27. The DPKO/DFS Aviation Manual states that an Aerodrome Emergency Response Plan (AERP) should be established for aerodromes used by the UN in compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organization guidelines commensurate with the aircraft and other activities conducted at the aerodrome. In addition, a grid map of the aerodrome and its immediate vicinity should be provided for use by the aerodrome services concerned and should be conspicuously posted in fire stations and on the rescue firefighting and supporting vehicles.

28. There was no AERP for the James Spriggs Pane Airport (JSPA) and a grid map of the aerodrome and its immediate vicinity had not been posted conspicuously at the fire stations and the rescue firefighting trucks and support vehicles. Furthermore, the fire points in the aerodrome were not numbered as required by the DPKO Aviation Manual of May 2005.

29. The UNMIL Airfield Manager indicated that UNMIL is an operator and does not have the responsibility to draw up an AERP despite having almost exclusive use of the airport. The Liberia Domestic Airports Agency (LDAA) is responsible for drawing up the AERP, but it had not done so. Absence of an AERP could jeopardize the safety of UN personnel and UNMIL air assets in the event of an incident at the JSPA.

Recommendations 6 and 7

The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should:

- (6) Assist the Liberia Domestic Airport Agency in developing the Aerodrome Emergency Response Plan to ensure the safety of UN staff and assets; and**
- (7) Provide a grid map of the aerodrome and its vicinity and conspicuously post the map to aid during emergencies.**

30. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 6 but stated that the UNMIL AERP includes an "on base" and "off base" aircraft emergency response plan which is available to the LDAA and may be used as a basis for developing AERP for JSPA. Based on further information and evidence provided by the Aviation Unit, recommendation 6 has been closed.*

31. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 7 but stated that the Mission has provided draft grid plans to LDAA and the Roberts International Airport (RIA) for the JSPA and RIA to provide updated information before finalization the plans. However, there has been no response to date despite several reminders. Recommendation 7 remains open pending finalization and appropriate dissemination of grid maps of the aerodrome.*

Fuel Unit fire safety

32. The DPKO/DFS Fuel Operations Manual requires the Chief of the Fuel Unit to prepare a written emergency response plan for every location where fuel is received, stored or dispensed. According to Section 10 of the DPKO/DFS Fuel Operations Manual, this should cover, amongst others, the Mission's response to fire. This plan must be up-to-date and tested at least once annually.

33. An emergency response plan was developed at the time of the audit. However, it did not fully meet all the requirements as set out in Section 10 of the DPKO/DFS Fuel Operations Manual. In particular, the emergency response plan did not cover the Mission's response in the event of fire. OIOS notes that the emergency response plan was not developed in coordination with the FSU as required.

34. The Fuel Cell located at the Star Base in Monrovia is the main hub for the storage and distribution of all fuel for UNMIL operations. At any point in time, the Fuel Cell stores more than 400,000 gallons of diesel fuel and a large quantity of petrol, oil and lubricants and, as such, constitutes a potential risk for industrial fire. OIOS visited the Fuel Cell and observed the following conditions, which indicated high risk of fire with the potential for substantial damage to UN assets and loss of lives:

- The main fuel storage tankers were not fenced off;

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- There was no controlled access to the fuel storage area; and
 - The main power house for Star Base was located in close proximity of the lubricant storage area and fuel dispensing station at the corner of the access route routinely used by fuel trucks.

35. The lack of preventive measures increases the likelihood of fire and an inadequate emergency response plan could compromise the effectiveness of the emergency response. According to the Chief of the Fuel Unit, there is now a plan to relocate the power plant away from the Fuel Cell area.

Recommendations 8 and 9

The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should:

(8) Ensure that the Fuel Unit, in coordination with the Fire Safety Unit, develops an emergency response plan for every location where fuel is received, stored or dispensed; and

(9) Ensure that the Fuel Unit assesses the risks at the Star Base fuel storage area and takes appropriate remedial actions.

36. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 8 and stated that the existing emergency response plan will be developed into a full written document. Amendments will be effected when the FSU receives the UN Fire Safety Policy from DFS.* Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of the finalized emergency response plan.

37. The UNMIL Office of Mission Support *accepted recommendation 9 and stated that the FSU, in coordination with the Fuel Unit, is currently conducting a risk assessment of all fuel stations including the Star Base fuel storage area.* Recommendation 9 remains open pending receipt of the risk assessment for the Star Base fuel storage area and verification that appropriate remedial action has been taken.

C. Capacity and training

External support

38. In case of an industrial fire, the UNMIL FSU may need support from other fire agencies in and around Monrovia. However, the UNMIL Joint Operations Centre only has the contact numbers for two of the five agencies. Additionally, there was no evidence to suggest that the FSU made formal arrangements with these fire agencies to enable cooperation in case of an industrial fire beyond the capacity of the FSU.

39. The absence of external support could significantly reduce the FSU's ability to contain a large fire in a timely manner.

Recommendation 10

(10) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should establish active partnerships with other fire service agencies in Monrovia to ensure the effective containment of large fires.

40. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 10 and stated that the FSU will take appropriate action.* Recommendation 10 remains open pending receipt of evidence showing the establishment of active partnerships with other fire service agencies in Monrovia.

Firefighters and skill training

41. Paragraph 2.1.8 of the FSU SOP states that all national and international staff be trained in the same standard, i.e. the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001. The training shall focus on competency as the final goal and shall be fully documented. Certificates of achievement shall be awarded after a firefighter has achieved the desired level of competency. Competency shall be re-tested at six month intervals.

42. A review of six out of 25 personnel files to assess the skills, qualification and experience of firefighters revealed the Mission had not provided fire awareness training to firefighters as required in paragraph 2.1.4 of the FSU SOP. Four of the six reviewed files were for currently serving firemen that had no documents on their respective files to indicate they had the requisite firefighting experience prior to joining the FSU in July 2008. The personnel files do not have evidence to support training in the NFPA 1001 standard for firefighters.

43. The absence of continuous training and tests of competency may reduce the firefighter's ability to assess, react and make effective use of available firefighting equipment during emergencies.

Recommendation 11

(11) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit trains firefighters on the National Fire Protection Association standard.

44. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 11 and stated that the FSU will take appropriate action to ensure the training of firefighters.* Recommendation 11 remains open pending receipt of evidence showing that firefighters have been trained on the National Fire Protection Association standard.

Fire awareness training

45. As per paragraph 1.1.3 of the FSU's SOP, the FSU is responsible for providing fire awareness training to all Mission personnel.

46. The FSU provided fire awareness training but there was the need to tailor the training to the unique circumstances of staff in certain units. In this regard, OIOS notes that the content of fire awareness training was the same for all sections of UNMIL although the work of some staff require specific, targeted training.

Recommendation 12

(12) The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit designs training programmes to target the specific fire safety requirements of sections/units exposed to high risk.

47. *The UNMIL Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 12 and stated that the current programme covers all topics in various work environments. However, the FSU will explore the possibility of identifying specific risk areas that need to be covered more thoroughly during 2010.* Recommendation 12 remains open pending confirmation of the development of specific training programmes for sections/units at high risk.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

48. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNMIL for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
1	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should promulgate a fire safety policy and programme in compliance with the Fire Safety Guidelines.	Governance	Medium	O	Receipt of the new Fire Safety Policy.	2 nd Quarter 2010
2	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit coordinates the fire safety efforts of the various sections/units of the Mission on the implementation of fire safety measures.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of the new Fire Safety Policy.	2 nd Quarter 2010
3	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should require all sections/units to obtain mandatory clearance of the Fire Safety Unit prior to commencing the construction of facilities with a potentially high level of fire hazards.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of the new Fire Safety Policy.	1 st Quarter 2010
4	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit develops evacuation plans for all premises in compliance with the International Fire Codes and Fire Safety Guidelines.	Operational/ Compliance	Medium	O	Receipt of the Fire Safety Plan covering all facilities; confirmation that there has been a change in the assembly point of the Mission Headquarters; and receipt of the updated fire warden list.	2 nd Quarter 2010
5	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Designated Fire Safety Official maintains a current and written fire safety risk assessment for all UNMIL facilities.	Compliance	High	O	Confirmation of the conduct of fire safety risk assessments for all high risk areas.	1 st Quarter 2010
6	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should assist the Liberia Domestic Aviation Agency in developing the Aerodrome Emergency Response Plan to ensure the safety of UN staff and assets.	Operational/ Compliance	Medium	C	Action completed	Implemented
7	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should provide a grid map of the aerodrome and its vicinity and	Operational/ Compliance	Medium	O	Finalization and appropriate dissemination of grid maps of the aerodrome.	1 st Quarter 2010

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
8	conspicuously post the map to aid during emergencies. The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fuel Unit, in coordination with the Fire Safety Unit, develops an emergency response plan for every location where fuel is received, stored or dispensed.	Compliance	Medium	O	Receipt of the finalized emergency response plan.	1 st Quarter 2010
9	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fuel Unit assesses the risks at the Star Base fuel storage area and take appropriate remedial actions.	Compliance	Medium	O	Receipt of the risk assessment for the Star Base fuel storage area and verification that the appropriate remedial action has been taken.	1 st Quarter 2010
10	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should establish active partnerships with other fire service agencies in Monrovia to ensure the effective containment of large fires.	Operational	Medium	O	Verification that a recommendation to establish partnerships with the other fire service agencies in Monrovia has been communicated.	1 st Quarter 2010
11	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit trains the firefighters on the National Fire Protection Association standard.	Compliance	High	O	Receipt of evidence showing that firefighters have been trained on the National Fire Protection Association standard.	1 st Quarter 2010
12	The UNMIL Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Fire Safety Unit designs training programmes to target the specific fire safety requirements of sections/units exposed to high risk.	Operational	Medium	O	Confirmation of the development of specific training programmes for sections/units at high risk.	1 st Quarter 2010

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNMIL in response to recommendations.