

Group Policy

Whistleblowing

Introduction

The Welding Alloys Group are committed to operating at all times, and in everything that we do, to the highest standards of integrity. However, all organisations can occasionally be affected by conduct that is dangerous, against the law or breaches ethical or professional codes.

The aim of this procedure is to encourage you to raise any genuine concerns you might have about certain wrongdoings within the company without fear of reprisal, to provide you with guidance on how to raise those concerns and to enable us to investigate such concerns and deal with them appropriately.

Who is covered by this policy?

This procedure applies to all employees, apprentices, workers, contractors and anyone else who has a contract to carry out work for us personally.

Scope

This policy covers what you should do if you have reason to believe that something dangerous, unlawful or unethical is going on at work and is affecting (or risks affecting) them or other colleagues. When you report these kinds of concerns it is called whistleblowing.

This policy also covers the actions of third parties such as suppliers, service providers, and clients, as well as our staff. If you are concerned about a third party, please also raise them with us before approaching anyone else.

If your complaint is about the behaviour of others towards you, our bullying and harassment policy or grievance policy contain the relevant guidance on how to proceed. These types of behaviour are not covered by this whistleblowing policy.

Types of wrongdoing addressed by this procedure

This is not an exhaustive list, but the types of concerns you may want to raise with us by whistleblowing could include:

- Any activity you suspect is criminal
- Any activity you suspect puts health and safety at risk
- Any activity you suspect may damage the environment
- Any activity you suspect breaches our policy on bribery and corruption
- Any failure to comply with legal or regulatory obligations
- Any failure to meet professional requirements
- Any attempt to conceal one or more of these activities

Please speak to your local or Group HR Department if you are unsure whether something that you are concerned about is covered by this policy.

Confidentiality and anonymity

You are always encouraged to raise concerns openly, and we actively discourage anonymous whistleblowing. This is because it is not always easy to manage and to investigate anonymous reports, especially since if we are unable to ask you for clarification for further details, we may struggle to clarify and find evidence to support your allegations and/or reach an informed conclusion. In these circumstances, we risk missing evidence or opportunities to gather important supporting information, or identify helpful witnesses, because we may simply be unaware of their existence, in spite of our best efforts to uncover them.

However, if you prefer to keep your identity anonymous, we will do all that we can to ensure that you retain your anonymity, and the confidentiality of your concerns, as far as possible. If we need to disclose your identity to others as part of the investigation, we will always discuss with you beforehand both our desire and our reasons for wishing to identify you.

Protection of whistleblowers

There are no reprisals for mistakes or if following our investigations, (which we will always conduct thoroughly and conscientiously), we conclude that there has been no breach of law, policy or unethical conduct. However, to qualify for protection, the disclosure must, in the reasonable belief of the worker making the disclosure, show that one or more of the following events has happened, is happening or is likely to happen and that it is in the public interest to make the disclosure:

- A criminal offence
- Failure to comply with any legal obligation
- Miscarriage of justice
- Danger to health & safety of any individual
- Danger to the environment, or,
- Deliberate concealment of any of any of the above.

If at any time, you do not feel that you have been fairly or properly treated by us in the handling of your whistleblowing concern, you must inform us immediately. You should inform your local HR Department or Group HR in the first instance; and if you are not satisfied with the outcome of that conversation, you should follow the process set out in our grievance policy.

We also protect whistleblowers from others, so where a whistleblower reports to us that they have been treated inappropriately by others, (including having received threats as a result of raising their concerns), we will take disciplinary action against those individuals. The consequences of us taking this action could include dismissal of such individual(s) for gross misconduct. Whistleblowers may also be entitled to take legal action against those individuals.

If you have raised a concern in good faith, our process and all those involved in giving effect to it will support and protect you. However, if a false concern is raised with us in bad faith (e.g. for malicious reasons), we will invoke our disciplinary policy and you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Involving the press/media

Any concerns covered by this procedure should be raised with the company to allow us the chance to deal with them. You should not bypass this procedure and air concerns externally, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Involving the media in a whistleblowing matter often has the effect of inflaming the situation, not assisting it. It can significantly hamper evidence gathering and the willingness of other relevant individuals to support the process.

We therefore strongly discourage you from involving the media. We will treat any contact with the press as a serious disciplinary issue justifying dismissal unless exceptional circumstances exist. For example, we would generally expect you to have taken all reasonable steps to deal with the matter internally, or with an external regulator.

Remember also that social media sites such as YouTube and Facebook are public rather than private spaces, and they are not the appropriate channel for raising concerns.

Procedure for raising a whistleblowing concern

- Raise your concerns with your local HR Department in the first instance. You may do so in writing or in person.
- If you would prefer not to discuss your concerns with your local HR Department or you consider that your concerns are extremely serious, you should write to the Group HR Director.
- Please explain that you are raising your concerns as part of the Welding Alloys Group whistleblowing policy and procedure. Then set out all the key facts, including names of those involved and all relevant dates.
- You will be invited to a meeting at which you can discuss your concerns. You are entitled to bring someone with you to this meeting – and any subsequent meetings. That companion may be a colleague (or a trade union representative, if relevant). Anyone who accompanies you will be asked to agree to keep strictly confidential the contents of the meeting including any materials disclosed and/or examined during it. This obligation of confidentiality will extend before, during and after the meeting and any following investigation that we conduct in relation to the concerns raised by you.
- Following this meeting, we will investigate the matters raised and we may request that you come to additional meetings to assist us in our efforts. We may also decide to involve relevant external (or internal) specialists to help us conduct a thorough, fair and responsible investigation.
- Our relevant personnel involved in this investigation will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation as far as they are able. For a number of reasons, generally relating to legal obligations, including obligations of confidence, to others, or in relation to any legal advice that we may decide to take on our own behalf, we may not be able to share every detail of our discoveries or deliberations with you. We will always endeavor, however, to reassure you, as best as we can, of the fact that we are taking your concerns seriously and that we are conducting a responsible investigation.
- It is possible that the outcome of our investigations will not be one that you find satisfactory. If this happens, you are entitled to complain to the Group HR Director or a member of the Welding Alloys Executive Team and request a review of what has been done and concluded. The outcome of this review will be the final stage in this procedure.

Signed: 

Dominic Stekly CEO
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