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Web Site: [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

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Our Ref: F0007560

12 May 2011

Dear xxxxxxxxxx

### Freedom of Information Request F0007560

I am writing in response to your request for information from the Department for Transport (DfT) under the Freedom of Information Act. In answer to your query, ***“What is your organisations policy on the Kirpan (a Sikh Dagger/Symbol) do you have any restrictions upon staff or visitors or passengers carrying the Kirpan or any regulations upon its size, length or other aspects of the Kirpan. Further is it banned within your organisation?”***, please be advised that DfT restricts the carriage of certain items by passengers on ships, aeroplanes and in the Channel Tunnel for security purposes, although the Kirpan is not specifically mentioned in any of the relevant legislation.

The Channel Tunnel (Security) Order provides for the Department to serve directions on Channel Tunnel operators to deliver protective security measures. The Kirpan belongs to the category of ‘ceremonial weapons and swords’. The carriage of such items is allowed, although if the length of one exceeds specified restrictions, its carriage will be subject to the operator's consent. An operator may refuse to allow the carriage of any article which is inherently dangerous or which could be used to commit an act of violence or threat.

Similar arrangements are in place for maritime transport. Instructions to port facilities and ships include a list of prohibited articles which must not be allowed into restricted areas, controlled buildings or on board ship without a valid lawful reason.

With respect to airport security, knives with a sharp or pointed blade and / or a blade longer than 6cm are prohibited in hand luggage. In addition, airport managers have the discretion to prohibit any article which, in their view might be used or adapted for causing injury or the incapacitation of a person. The carriage of blades including Kirpans and knives less than 6cm is at the discretion of the airport manager.

The full list of prohibited articles in Aviation can be found on the Department for Transport section of the Direct Gov website at:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Foreigntravel/AirTravel/DG\\_176922](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Foreigntravel/AirTravel/DG_176922)

Bus operators have their own conditions of carriage and the Department does not give specific policy advice to them regarding passengers carrying the Kirpan.

On the railways the carriage of blades is an operational matter; DfT therefore provides no advice to train operating companies regarding passengers carrying the Kirpan.

As an employer, the Department complies with the aims of the public sector Equality Duty, to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and foster good relations between people from different groups. There are no formal restrictions upon staff or visitors carrying the Kirpan and it is not banned within this organisation.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. A copy of this response and the information provided may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/04  
Ashdown House  
Sedlescombe Road North  
Hastings  
East Sussex TN37 7GA  
E-mail: [FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

**XXXXXXXXXXXX**

## **Your right to complain to [DfT/Agency] and the Information Commissioner**

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF