



Safety Matters

Health & Safety Services Newsletter - Number 53

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Health and Safety Policy

The University's health and safety policy statement has been revised and updated. There are significant changes, in particular to clarify who is responsible for what. There is a new personal foreword by the Vice-Chancellor, which is repeated here.

"The University of Reading is committed to excellence in everything we do. That includes how we manage health and safety.

Ensuring the health and safety of all staff, students and visitors must be one of our highest priorities. The University Health and Safety policy sets out the management framework we use to achieve that. It specifies that it is the particular responsibility of line management, who are in a position to exercise control over their School, Department or Directorate activities, to ensure that those activities are carried out safely.

As Vice-Chancellor, I am accountable to Council for all aspects of health and safety within the University, including the provision of adequate financial, physical and human resources. However I rely on the full co-operation of individual members of the University in doing all they can to help maintain the highest standards in their own particular areas.

Consistent with our mission statement to develop a culture that stimulates and supports our staff and students, let us work together to achieve excellence in health and safety."

Gordon Marshall
Vice-Chancellor

Please take a few minute to read the revised policy on the Health and Safety Services web site (<http://www.fmd.rdg.ac.uk/safety/policy.asp>) and ask yourself what **you** can to do, whatever your role within the university, to promote safe working.

Updates to Safety Guides

A completely new Safety Guide is now available on **working at height**. It is accompanied by a new Safety Note on the use of **ladders and stepladders**. (See 'What's New on the H&SS web site).



We all work at height from time to time, although you may not recognise it. Work at height is any activity that could lead to a fall and someone being injured. So putting up art work above head height for a display; storing papers on a high shelf; or using a stepladder to put rubbish in a large skip is all classed as work at height.

Managers and staff should ask themselves if there are other ways of working that would avoid working at height; if not, then ensure that the right equipment such as a stepladder is available, and that staff know how to use the equipment safely.

Chemical Waste Collection



The time has almost come for us to start the annual collection of waste chemicals. Schools are asked to start identifying what needs to be disposed of – forms are available from H&SS. We will be writing out to Area Health and Safety Co-ordinators with further details in early July.

Fire Action Notices

The red 'Fire – what you should do' notices have been redesigned in pictorial format and are now available in Word for Area Health and Safety Co-ordinators to customise for your building and print your own. Hard copies are also available from H&SS.



Latex allergy – on the increase

A comment made by an HSE Specialist Inspector during a recent inspection at Whiteknights has prompted this reminder about the use of latex gloves in laboratories.

Exposure to latex can result in latex allergy. This is a condition that leads to skin and/or respiratory problems; it can progress to become a life threatening illness (Type I). The disease is on the increase, but it is entirely avoidable in the laboratory situation. For general use, Nitril (nitrile) or “p.p.e. grade vinyl” gloves are recommended, as they are free of the rubber proteins responsible for most Type I allergies. Nitril gloves are said to be three times more puncture-resistant than other synthetic gloves. Gloves should also be powder-free (the starch used in powdered gloves has been shown to be responsible for some allergies) and “hypoallergenic”.

Health & Safety Services are drafting a Safety Note to provide more information about the nature, signs and symptoms of latex allergy – this will be placed on our website in the near future. In the mean time:

- 1 Switch NOW to latex-free gloves and get rid of any stocks of latex gloves, whether powdered or not;
- 2 Alter your ordering system so that powder-free nitril or vinyl [p.p.e. grade] gloves are ordered as standard;
- 3 Consult manufacturers' literature if you need gloves to offer protection against penetration by specific chemicals – nitril or vinyl gloves may not offer you the protection you need.

Finally, if YOU have any concerns over your use of latex gloves in the past, please discuss them with the Occupational Health Service in confidence (contact details on our website.)

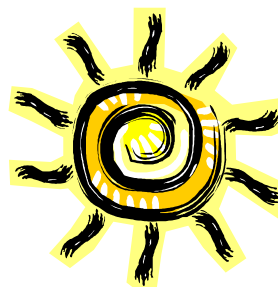
Steam duct asbestos removal project

Contractors are about to start work to remove asbestos from the steam ducts on Whiteknights campus. Campus occupants will see:

- A number of contractors' cabins located round campus;
- Workers wearing white coveralls and respirators to access the steam ducts;
- Temporary caravans and plastic tents being used as decontamination units by the contractors;
- A number of skips marked 'Asbestos – do not open';
- Vehicles on pathways and grassed areas to bring in equipment and remove waste.

Staff, students and visitors should be reassured that the work will be very carefully controlled. It has also been planned to minimise any disruption to campus occupants. However if anyone does have any concerns about safety, they should contact Health and Safety Services.

Summer is here – be Skin Aware



With over 70,000 cases of skin cancer diagnosed each year, the occurrence of this cancer due to exposure to the sun is increasing. It is one of the most common

forms of cancer, and therefore we all need to be aware of how we can protect ourselves.

If you need to work outside e.g. grounds maintenance staff, you should be provided with sun cream by your line manager. If you have not been provided with any, then ask.

The following is taken from the HSE website and whilst it is aimed at those who work outside, its advice should be followed by everyone;

- Keep your top on.
- Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunch time.
- Use a high factor sunscreen of at least PF15 on any exposed skin.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

- Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.



Autumn is coming

Think back to May, when the weather was unseasonably cold and the steam heating was off. Lots of electric heaters appeared in offices. In one office a radiant electric bar heater set fire to a bag of shredded paper that had been left next to the radiator.

Fortunately the building was evacuated and the fire was extinguished by staff. However the Fire Brigade were not impressed with how the fire had been started.

We do not want to see a repeat in the autumn when the weather turns cold again; however we do realise that there are times when the workplace temperature falls below what is comfortable. Therefore the University has a **policy** on the use of **portable heaters**. This has been agreed by the University Facilities Management Committee and is on the Facilities Management web site at

<http://www.fmd.rdg.ac.uk/bsd/policies.asp>

- Heaters and fans are permitted, but must be convector or oil filled.
- Appliances must be purchased through the Purchasing Office.
- Appliances must be an approved type (see the web site).
- Radiant heaters i.e. with exposed heating bars or elements are NOT allowed.
- All appliances MUST be PAT tested.
- For the summer months, portable cooling appliances (air conditioning) that rely on exhausting through an open window are prohibited from use on the Ground Floor, for security reasons.

Heaters should not be brought in from home. Remember that your building electrical circuit may not be able to cope with the added load of multiple portable heaters – FMD will be able to advise. **AND**, please don't forget that switching on has an **environmental impact!** So only do so if you really have to.

Soldering

A new European Directive, the Restriction of Hazardous Substances Directive, comes into effect in July. This restricts the use of six hazardous materials found in electrical and electronic products. All applicable products for sale in Europe after **1 July 2006** must not exceed defined limits for lead, mercury and other substances. The Directive applies mainly to manufacture, and there are exemptions for repair and maintenance of existing equipment. However RoHS will have a minor impact on the University because it is likely that solder containing lead will gradually be withdrawn from sale.

In theory, there are health benefits for moving to the use of lead-free solder. However lead-free solder requires the use of more aggressive flux, and a higher operating temperature. Flux contains colophony, which has a workplace exposure limit of 0.05 mg. m⁻³ for an 8 hr working day, or 0.15 mg m⁻³ for a 15 minute exposure limit. The fumes are a respiratory sensitiser, and the problem may get worse with the higher temperatures necessary for lead-free solders. Proper ventilation and extraction is therefore even more essential.

Departments are free to choose whether or not to move to lead-free solder, although in time they may be limited by the non-availability of lead solder. Existing stocks of lead solder can be used up. However any electrical equipment containing lead (and other hazardous materials), and lead solder itself, are now classed as hazardous waste and must be disposed of as such. Further information can be obtained from:

Andrew Tooley, Extn 6258, on purchasing and supply aspects

Malcolm Iosson, Extn 8887, on health issues

Ian Cruickshank, Extn. 6927, on waste disposal aspects

If Departments choose to move to lead-free solder, your current soldering devices may need to be replaced. These should need to be disposed of in accordance with the **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive**. Purchasing have arrangements with the University's contracted supplier to take back old devices when new ones are purchased, thus avoiding the cost of disposal. The supplier may give Departments some value for them in terms of discounted prices against new appliances.

Tree felling and remedial works



The Grounds Section has been carrying out a tree survey of the Whiteknights campus and other areas. The campus has been divided into zones, based on the potential

risk to staff, students and the public. The main aim of the survey is to identify potential hazards due to structural weakness or other defects and to identify remedial work to make trees safe. These works could include preventing or deterring access to the tree, pruning or felling. The recommended tree work will be appropriate to the risk zone in which the tree is located. For example dead wood within a tree would be removed if over a road but left in area such as the Wilderness.

The survey has highlighted a number of trees for removal and as a result trees will need to be felled during the coming weeks. The Grounds Section is well aware of the controversy that tree removal can cause! However where trees pose a significant threat, then their removal is sometimes necessary.

Lift safety

Many University buildings have lifts installed, and occasionally these break down. If this happens, it is important that you follow the guidance opposite.

This information is given in a new Safety Note, Passenger Lift Safety, No. 41, available on H&SS web site or from H&SS. Departments are asked to give this wide circulation to staff and students.

What to do if a passenger lift breaks down

NEVER overload the lift, either with passengers or goods. All lifts are clearly marked with the maximum load and passenger numbers. If you think the lift is full, do not enter.

If you are stuck in a lift

- Press the lift alarm button. You will need to hold this in for at least 3 seconds until the alarm sounds.
- Use the lift emergency phone or intercom system to contact Security Services.
- Remain calm. Sit or stand at the back of the lift away from the doors.
- Maintain contact with Security Services – use the emergency phone/intercom. Security will also come to the building and keep you informed of progress.
- Wait for a lift engineer to release you.

Staff – if the lift breaks down in your building, with passenger(s) in it

- Use the indicator panel to identify where the lift has stuck.
- Go the nearest floor and check by calling that there is someone in the lift – or ask Security Services to dial the lift emergency number and make contact with anyone in the lift.
- Reassure the trapped person(s). Encourage them to maintain contact with Security Services via the emergency phone/intercom.
- Call Security Services on Extn 6300 and check that they know that the lift has broken down. Make sure that Security are arranging for the lift engineer to be called out.

Some lifts are only designed as goods lifts. These must not be used to carry passengers.

DO NOT use a lift if you are the only person in a building during out-of-hours working.

NEVER attempt to force open lift doors or get out of a broken down lift until the lift engineer has arrived. They will take charge and release any trapped persons.

The response time for the lift engineer is up to 1 hour. If there is likely to be a very long delay before the lift engineer arrives, as a last resort Security Services may call the Fire Brigade.