

H&S performance

It is good practice for organisations to measure what they are doing to implement their health and safety policy, to assess how effectively they are controlling risks, and how well they are developing a positive health and safety culture. To this end Senior Management Board (SMB) has agreed to trial the use of a measurement tool, HASMAP, and will use it to set targets for improvements in health and safety.

A low accident rate is no guarantee that risks are being effectively controlled and will not lead to injuries, ill health or loss in the future. Therefore techniques that tell you how well you are doing against recognised management standards are preferred. HASMAP is a performance tool that has been developed by the Universities Health and Safety Association for use in the higher education sector. It can be used during health and safety audits to provide graphical output across 12 performance indicators, such as planning, risk assessment, application of workplace precautions, communication with staff and students, and review of performance.

SMB is committed to continuous improvement in health and safety and recognises that it should provide direction and leadership to achieve this. It has agreed that HASMAP should be used to set targets for health and safety improvement, which will be reported to SMB via the University Health and Safety Committee. Performance will be scored during audits of Schools/Directorates.

While this may seem very 'management-speak', it is actually a positive step forward in bringing health and safety to the forefront of management activities. Health and safety doesn't just happen, it needs to be planned for, organised, and monitored. HASMAP will help make this happen.

Health and Safety (Offences) Act

New legislation comes into effect in January 2009 that increases the penalties that can be awarded for health and safety offences. HSE have stated that these new penalties will be applied for very serious breaches of the law.

The Health and Safety (Offences) Act 2008 raises the maximum penalties that can be imposed for breaching health and safety regulations in the lower courts from £5,000 to £20,000 and the range of offences for which an individual can be imprisoned has also been broadened.

Breaches of sections 2 to 8 of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) will carry maximum custodial sentences of 12 months on summary conviction and two years for a conviction on indictment. Sections 2 to 8 are the core of the HSWA and can be paraphrased as a duty to ensure the health safety and welfare of employees and non employees.

On past experience, the vast majority of prosecutions in the UK have been for very serious failures which have resulted in death or serious injury, and which have been the direct result of complacency, lack of awareness, failure to train staff adequately or to exercise proper control of work activities.

The University sets itself high standards and has written guidance to help Schools/Directorates control workplace risks. SMB has discussed the potential implications of the new legislation for the organisation as a whole and for individuals. Please see the HSE enforcement policy in the box below; senior management took note of this in their deliberations on the implications of the new Act at an SMB meeting this month. While the possibility of a prosecution of individuals is extremely remote, SMB wishes to reassure staff that anyone carrying out health and safety responsibilities on behalf of the University has the full support of the University.

If anyone has any concerns, or would like to check that their unit's existing arrangements for managing health and safety are adequate, please contact Health and Safety Services.

HSE Enforcement policy

The following is an extract from HSE's web site, quoting their Enforcement Policy Statement:

"Prosecutions should be in the public interest and where one or more of a list of circumstances apply. These include:

- where death was a result of a breach of the legislation;
- there has been reckless disregard of health and safety;
- there have been repeated breaches which give rise to significant risk, or persistent and significant poor compliance;
- false information has been supplied wilfully, or there has been intent to deceive in relation to a matter which gives rise to significant risk.

Prosecutions of individuals by health and safety regulators are not undertaken lightly. Any prosecutions of individuals are subject to the same strict considerations set out above and are only taken if warranted, and not in lieu of a case against their employer."

Environment Agency visit

Environment Agency inspectors carried out a reinspection visit in October to check the University's progress in improving our procedures for managing radioactive sources. They advised that they were fully satisfied with the measures that had been put in place.

Issue 60 of Safety Matters identified the improvements that the University was required to make to satisfy our authorisation conditions for using, storing and disposing of radioactive materials. Staff in H&SS, the School of Biological Sciences and the School of Human and Environmental Sciences have put considerable effort into revising procedures and record keeping, improving conditions in labs, and defining staff training requirements. This hard work paid off when the EA inspectors complimented us on the progress that had been made.

The move of Biological Sciences staff to the Hopkins Building will also provide an opportunity to embed high standards in up-to-date and modern facilities. Simon Feist, Area Health and Safety Co-ordinator in Biological Sciences, is taking the lead in organising refresher training for all staff who will work in the new facility.

Workshop safety

General health and safety audits of schools have identified a number of weaknesses in the management of, and safety in workshops. Because of the high risk nature of machines installed in University workshops, it is particularly important that the machines, the operators, and the management system all comply with legislation and best practice.

Safety Note 34 outlines the law relating to safe use of machinery and work equipment. In the case of mills, lathes, saws etc key requirements are to:



- Undertake a risk assessment to identify what control measures are required;
- Prevent contact with dangerous parts of the machinery e.g. cutting blades, drive belts, by for example providing and using guarding;
- Provide emergency stops that are clearly visible and easily accessible;
- Provide local exhaust ventilation where required e.g. where soft or hard wood dust may be generated;
- Define what maintenance and inspections are required, and to carry these out;
- Ensure that operators (staff or students) are trained and authorised before being allowed to use workshop machinery.

Specific requirements apply to woodworking machinery. These are set out in the HSE Approved Code of Practice on "The safe use of woodworking machinery", L114. This includes the need for effective braking on certain machines such as narrow band saws and circular saws.

Schools that operate workshops have been advised of the need to review their management systems, bring risk assessments up-to-date, and ensure that machines comply with the relevant legislation and ACOPs. Anyone needing more information should contact Health and Safety Services.

Driving for work

The Corporate Manslaughter Act has raised awareness of the possibility of employers being prosecuted following a serious traffic accident caused by an employee driving on business. It is important that Schools/Directorates have arrangements in place to reduce the risk to individual drivers and to the University.

Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do. About 300 people are killed or seriously injured every week in crashes involving someone who was "at work". The University has a responsibility to take steps to manage these risks down to as low a level as reasonably possible. We will be developing a road risk policy during 2009. In the meantime, **Schools/ Directorates should have measures in place to manage occupational road risk:**

- If staff drive regularly for work (which includes occasional trips to conferences and short journeys between campuses) you will need to include driving in your department's risk assessments;

The Vehicle

- Maintain University/department vehicles in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations (remembering that a vehicle counts as work equipment under PUWER);
- Nominate a person(s) to carry out weekly basic checks of tyres, lights, screen wash levels etc, and keep simple records to demonstrate this;
- Make information about the vehicle available to drivers (e.g. tyre pressures, controls/features – all of this should be in the vehicle handbook);

- Use vehicles that are fit for purpose, and do not exceed weight or towing limits;
- Where cost effective to do so, use hire vehicles from a University contracted supplier – see details on Procurement’s web site at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/procurement/>;
- Ensure that older vehicles have a valid MOT certificate and comply with University insurance requirements (see the Insurance Office web pages at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/finance/opentoall/insurance/vehicleinsurance.htm>);
- Consider whether older vehicles should be replaced e.g. minibuses that are not fitted with seatbelts can be used legally, but on a risk basis it is difficult to justify not providing seat belts;

The Driver

- Make sure that staff are aware of their legal responsibilities as drivers (see below), and the need to plan journeys sensibly.
- You may need to check drivers’ documentation to verify that they have a valid licence and are not disqualified.

Staff who drive for work (excluding home-to-work travel) have responsibilities for themselves and others. You should make sure that:

- You have a valid driving licence for the category of vehicle, (noting the additional University requirements for driving minibuses - see Insurance Office web site; and that photo licences have to be renewed 10 years from date of issue);
- You carry out a basic check of roadworthiness on a University or hire vehicle before driving it (as the driver you are legally responsible for the vehicle’s condition);
- If using your own vehicle, it is roadworthy, has a current MOT Certificate if required, a valid tax disc, and is insured for business use (see below);
- You are fit to drive, including meeting the legal standards for eyesight, and not being under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including medication);
- You plan your journey sensibly to take account of weather conditions and the need for breaks.

Whether or not you claim business mileage, you are regarded as driving on University business and must have business insurance. This applies even for short journeys between campuses. The majority of insurance companies do not charge for occasional business use if this is declared at the time of annual renewal.

Training in risk assessment

Risk assessments are an integral part of H&S law in the UK. When risk assessments are done well, they help to manage and control risks at work. When done poorly, they can be a time consuming paper chase that contributes very little to people’s health, safety and wellbeing.

Risk assessments are the starting point for deciding what needs to be done to manage health and safety in the workplace. They are not difficult to do, nor should they take a lot of time. But they should be undertaken by people who

know about the work in question, can read round the topic, and **understand how to implement the results.**

If you are asked to do a risk assessment, you will benefit from training. Health & Safety Services run regular training courses, with the emphasis on practical exercises. We would be pleased to run more, or tailor the course to suit the hazards in your workplace.

To quote HSE, “on its own, paperwork never saved anyone. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself - action is what protects people. So risk assessments should be fit for purpose and acted upon”.



Our next course is on 21 and 26 November. Contact safety@reading.ac.uk or phone x8888 to book on it.

Council member for H&S

A lay member of the University Council, Bob Dwyer, has accepted an invitation from Council to have a formal role in “overseeing, challenging and ensuring the robustness of the health and safety governance process” within the University.

It is best practice in corporate governance to nominate a senior non-executive director to make sure that health and safety is properly addressed. An independent member of the governing body can act as health and safety champion and bring in expertise from other sectors. Bob is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development, and has been responsible for oversight of health and safety in multi-national companies. Prior to his retirement from fulltime employment in 2005 Bob was Group HR Director for several UK public companies, most recently Kidde plc and SSL international plc. He had responsibility for international health and safety policies and sat on board committees on Strategic Risk Management and Corporate Social Responsibility.

He therefore brings a breadth of experience and strategic outlook to the role. As a lay member, he is well placed to monitor that Council decisions take due account of health and safety considerations, and to lead a review of health and safety standards and performance.

Bob has right of attendance at the University Health and Safety Committee, and attended his first meeting in October. He commented that the oversight given by the Committee was ‘thorough’ and endorsed the direction that the University will be taking on road risk issues – see above.

Arson attack

Arson in buildings has increased greatly in recent years. By having ready access to many of our academic buildings the University of Reading is not immune from the risk of arson. We can all help to protect the University, staff and students, by being vigilant and by reducing access to flammable materials.

The motives for arson are varied, but include spite, revenge, jealousy, pyromania and the desire of criminals to conceal their crime. Half of all very large fires are thought to be as a result of arson. Up to 80% of businesses that experience a major fire are severely affected and many go out of business.

You can help reduce the likelihood of an attack by reporting suspicious activity to Security and by restricting access within our buildings by locking unattended offices and rooms. Other practical measures that we can take include:

- Ensuring that cleaner's cupboards and storerooms are locked when not required for use;
- Securely fastening windows and doors when locking up for the night;
- Removing litter bins from stairwells;
- Using a metal waste bin rather than a plastic one because plastic gives off toxic fumes if set on fire.

External waste bins and rubbish carelessly discarded around our buildings can present an arsonist with an easy opportunity to start a fire, without having to run the risk of entering a building. Collectively we can help negate this risk by carrying out a few practical control measures, including:

- Locating external waste bins at least 8 metres away from the building, and chaining or padlocking them to a fixed anchor point;
- Not dumping loose waste outside the building - always put it in the appropriate bin.

If a bin is full to overflowing contact Campus Services on Ext 6927 and request that it is emptied.

More information about arson prevention and other fire safety issues can be obtained by contacting our Fire Safety Advisor Peter Lawther on Ext 8282 or by e-mailing firesafety@reading.ac.uk

REACH Directive

REACH is a new European Union regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals. It came into force on 1st June 2007 and replaces a number of European Directives and Regulations with a single system. In time it may affect the University's use of chemicals.

A major part of REACH is the requirement for manufacturers or importers of substances to register them with a central [European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](http://www.echa.europa.eu). A registration package has to be supported by a standard set of data on that substance. The amount of data required is proportionate to the amount of substance manufactured or

supplied. No registration and no data means that the chemical cannot be manufactured or supplied legally.

REACH applies to substances manufactured or imported into the EU in quantities of 1 tonne per year or more. Generally, it applies to all individual chemical substances on their own, in [preparations](#) or in [articles](#) (if the substance is intended to be released during normal and reasonably foreseeable conditions of use from an article). There is a phased introduction, but by December 2010 substances supplied in quantities of >1000 tonnes p.a., or lesser quantities of substances very toxic to the aquatic environment, or carcinogenic, mutagenic or reproductive toxicant must be registered.

Most of the provisions of REACH apply to large industrial-scale quantities of chemicals. The implications for the University appear to be that:

- Some substances may be removed from the market;
- Any department using chemicals that might be withdrawn from sale, or where the proposed use is not supported by the registration information, should consider the implications for their work and consider alternatives;
- A **Chemical Safety Assessment (CSA)** may be required if the proposed use of the substance is not covered by the manufacturer's own CSA that is supplied with the product;
- Exposure scenarios have to be documented in a Chemical Safety Report (CSR) produced by the manufacturer and communicated to [downstream users](#) as annexes to the Safety Data Sheets.

Further details of this complex piece of legislation are given on HSE's web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/reach/index.htm> and on the web site of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) at http://reach.jrc.it/index_en.htm.

New H&SS secretary

In Estella's absence on maternity leave, we have a new secretary, Rebecca Bridges.

Beccy is a Reading Maths graduate, so knows her way around campus. But she is now finding out what it's like to be a member of staff, rather than a student! She has been amazed at the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep the University running. Beccy can be contacted on extension 8888, or via safety@reading.ac.uk.

Most of you will be aware that **Estella** is now a proud Mum – she and baby Daisy are doing well, and will be around to visit once Daisy is a bit older. Estella and Paul send thanks to everyone who contributed to Estella's present.

Health and Safety Services
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