

# SAFETY MATTERS

## Health & Safety Services: What's New?

In 2025, the University's central Health & Safety Services Team merged with the Technical Services Health & Safety Team to form a single, unified Health & Safety Services (HSS) function within Governance, Corporate Services.

### So, what does it mean for Health & Safety support within the Schools and Directorates?

You'll see a clearer focus on expert health and safety advice, with colleagues stepping back from non-safety activities such as operational facilities support and building/resource management. At the same time, a more structured team approach ensures reliable cover, so support continues seamlessly during absence or leave.

### A new way of working

HSS now operates through 5 dedicated teams under the direction of the Head of H&SS Wendy Manning and supported by Lucy McNeil as Team Administrator. These consist of teams supporting Schools and Directorates and maintain a named contact for continuity and competent advice to Heads / local H&S committees:

- **Team 1:** Led by Robin Hunter (with Jude Brindley + vacant post)
- **Team 2:** Led by Steve Ablett (with Margot Bishop and Simon Feist)
- **Team 3:** Led by Nick Bathurst (with Mo Masrom)

Specialist areas continue to be led by expert colleagues, including:

- **Team 4:** Fire Safety and Strategy Led by David Sharp (with Kevin McGovern)

- **Team 5:** Farms and Audit/Assurance (Steve Ansell)

### Looking ahead

As with any change, the new [structure](#) will take time to fully embed. A Health & Safety Service Level Agreement is now in place and available for reference, with ongoing reviews to ensure the service continues to meet the needs of Schools and Directorates.

An initial review of the new arrangements is already underway, led by Head of Health & Safety Services, Wendy Manning.

*Robin Hunter, Health and Safety Business Partner*

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## What is Health Surveillance?

Health surveillance is a programme of regular health checks carried out for employees who are exposed to specific risks at work. The purpose is to detect early signs of work-related ill health and take action to prevent it from getting worse. These checks could include respiratory and skin, HAVs (Hand Arm Vibration) and audio tests.

### Why is health surveillance carried out?

All employers are asked to ensure that they take steps to reduce workplace risks to a level that is as low as is reasonably practicable by putting controls in place. Health and safety law requires health surveillance when workers remain exposed to health risks even after you have put controls in place.

**How do I get Health Surveillance?** Managers are responsible for ensuring that there is a process in place to identify relevant employees who require health surveillance. They should identify, in consultation with their health and Safety Coordinator or H&S Services the type of assessments required for each worker based on their exposure profile.

Once this is known employees need to register for health surveillance. The following form needs to be completed and returned to the Occupational Health Service. [Health Surveillance Form](#) . Once this is received an appointment will be arranged.

### New workers

All new workers requiring health surveillance should complete the health surveillance enrolment form and return to the Occupational Health Service [occupationalhealth@reading.ac.uk](mailto:occupationalhealth@reading.ac.uk).

### Outcome of Health Surveillance

Once the appointment is completed the manager and employee will be advised of the outcome of health surveillance by providing an individual health record which gives details of the employee's fitness for work and the health surveillance they have had.

The test results will remain confidential to Occupational Health and will not be shared with managers or supervisors.

### Recall for Health Surveillance

Employees who are enrolled in the health surveillance programme will be recalled on a repeat annual basis by Occupational Health. Where it is appropriate an employee may be recalled on a more frequent basis.

If you have any questions, please contact Occupational Health

[occupationalhealth@reading.ac.uk](mailto:occupationalhealth@reading.ac.uk)

*Dawn Grout, Occupational Health Manager*

### Health and Safety Services contact details

[safety@reading.ac.uk](mailto:safety@reading.ac.uk)

0118 378 8888

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/health-safety-services/>

Whiteknights House (W027) Room G23

[Report an incident online](#)

## UoR Learn

**For all your Health and Safety Training Needs**

**Our training, both face-to-face and e-learning, is available here, or by emailing**

[safety@reading.ac.uk](mailto:safety@reading.ac.uk)

## Why Is It Important To Report A Near Miss?

**A near miss is a warning sign. An alert for where an accident may happen in the future.**

**Near misses may seem trivial but they are a valuable source of information.**

Failing to report near misses means missing out on an important opportunity to improve safety within the workplace. Some key reasons to report include:

- **Prevention:** Near misses help identify weak points in processes, training or equipment before an accident occurs.
- **Accountability:** Encouraging near-miss reporting improves safety, accountability and openness within the team.
- **Compliance:** Though not always legally required, near-miss reporting supports broader health and safety responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- **Data:** Logging near misses provides useful trend data that can inform your risk assessments and safety strategy.

Near misses are often overlooked because "nothing actually happened." Yet in health and safety, near misses are some of the most valuable warning signs we receive. A near miss is any unplanned event that had the potential to cause injury, illness, damage, or disruption, but fortunately did not. Reporting these incidents is one of the simplest and most effective ways we can create a safer university environment for everyone.

Universities are busy, complex places. Laboratories, workshops, offices, lecture theatres, libraries, kitchens, and public spaces all present different types of risk. A trailing cable that nearly causes a fall, chemicals stored incorrectly but discovered in time, or a malfunctioning door that almost traps someone may seem minor in isolation. However, these events often reveal underlying problems that, if left unresolved, could eventually result in serious harm.

The key reason to report near misses is prevention. Many major accidents are preceded by smaller warning events. Investigating a near miss allows hazards to be identified and corrected before someone is injured.

In this way, reporting is not about blame or criticism; it is about learning and improving. Every report provides valuable information that can help prevent future incidents affecting staff, students, contractors, or visitors.

Near miss reporting also helps strengthen our overall safety culture. A positive safety culture exists where everyone feels responsible for health and safety and confident that concerns will be taken seriously. When people actively report hazards and near misses, it demonstrates care for colleagues and contributes to a more open and proactive environment. Equally, when organisations respond constructively and visibly to reports, trust grows and participation increases.

Some people hesitate to report near misses because they think the issue is too small, they are worried about getting someone into trouble, or they assume someone else will report it. In reality, even minor concerns can highlight patterns or recurring risks that might otherwise remain unnoticed. A single report may not tell the full story, but several similar reports together can reveal significant issues requiring action.

Reporting near misses can also lead to practical improvements across the university. These may include better signage, revised procedures, improved training, maintenance repairs, or changes to equipment and working practices. Often, relatively small adjustments can prevent considerable harm and disruption later.

Importantly, reporting demonstrates professionalism and shared responsibility. Health and safety is not solely the responsibility of managers or safety teams; it relies on the awareness and involvement of everyone in the university community.

Staff and students are often the first to notice hazards because they work and study in these environments every day.

A near miss should always be treated as an opportunity to learn rather than a lucky escape to forget. By taking a few moments to report concerns promptly, we can help ensure our university remains a safe, supportive, and healthy place to work, study, and visit.

If you witness or experience a near miss, please report it using our online reporting system - [Report an Incident](#).

**Your action could prevent a future accident.**

*Jude Brindley, Health and Safety Adviser*

## University of Reading Health and Safety Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028

At the University of Reading, health and safety is fundamental to how we enable our community to thrive. Our [Health and Safety Strategic Action Plan \(2025–2028\)](#) sets out how we will move beyond compliance to a more proactive, insight-driven approach, embedding safety into everyday decisions across teaching, research, and operations.