

# Safety Matters

Health & Safety Services Newsletter - Number 53

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Health & Safety Services Facilities Management Directorate

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Services

## 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 (<a href="http://www.fmd.rdg.ac.uk/safety/policy.asp">http://www.fmd.rdg.ac.uk/safety/policy.asp</a>) 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 theree

equipment

safely.

#### Chemical Waste Collection



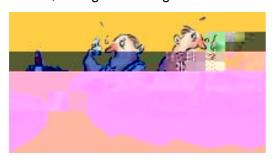
The time has almost come for us to start the annual collection of waste chemicals. Schools are asked to start identifying what needs to be disposed of – forms are available from H&SS We

will be writing out to Area Health and Safety Coordinators 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.

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 lan Cruickshank, Extn. 6927, on waste disposal aspects

If Departments choose to move to lead-free solder, your current soldering devices <u>may</u> need to be replaced. These should need to be disposed of in accordance with the **Waste Electrical**