

# Safetyline 124

H & S UPDATE APRIL 2011

**An incident at the Arts Tower on 21st March clearly demonstrates the need to test fire alarm systems weekly.** An electrical panel on the roof developed a fault activating an alarm connected to a subsidiary fire alarm panel on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the Arts Tower. The alarm signal should have activated the main panel on the ground floor but due to a programming error it didn't do so, and the sounders only activated on floors 9 upwards. Staff and students in the lecture theatres were unaware of the alarm. Although this incident was not life-threatening, it highlights the need to ensure fire alarm systems are tested regularly to check that all associated sounders perform correctly. Departments which test alarm system in their own buildings are urged to check with colleagues whether the alarm system works correctly during weekly tests. Technical Services and Safety Services will continue to test larger building as scheduled but we do ask that staff help by reporting to line management or Estates Helpdesk when they believe the alarm has failed to operate during a test in their specific area of the building.

**Lecturers requiring first aid assistance in teaching spaces** should use either the telephones present in the teaching space, a red "emergency phone" (usually located in communal areas) or a mobile phone to contact the University Control Room (on 0114 222 4444) to request first aid assistance. It is important to give accurate information to the Control Room staff on the location of the incident. Control Room staff have a list of First Aiders who can be called upon to help; alternatively they are able to call the emergency services. Telephones in teaching spaces are likely to connect through to "Audio Visual" who will either take necessary details or connect the call to the Control Room. Information will be installed in teaching spaces over the next few weeks and placed on Safety Services website.

Several Departments are asking for copies of the **minutes from University Health & Safety Committee meetings** to inform their own Departmental Committees. These can be found online from Safety Services website by clicking on the "Health and Safety Committee information" button in the left hand margin, but you will need to input your User ID and password to access the "Meeting Minutes" and "Annual Health and Safety Reports". Committee Meeting minutes are approved at the next Committee meeting after which they will be placed on the website. Annual Reports are available after the first meeting of the year is held. These reports summarise the work undertaken and statistics collected by Safety Services over the relevant year.

University senior management recently received a complaint from a second year student that a **fire alarm** sounded in his own department but that he and others weren't sure what to do; after about 30 seconds the alarm ceased. His concern appears to be that had there been a real fire the time lost waiting to see what was going to happen might be crucial and that alarm testing should be undertaken outside normal hours. It is important that alarm tests are done when there are people about so that they can become familiar with the sound and by broadcasting the day and time of tests, then occupants can be confident that they won't have to evacuate unless the alarm continues after 30 seconds. It is important staff and students realise that fire alarm systems are sensitive and will alarm at the early stages of a fire which allows adequate time for people to evacuate safely, including those who might take longer due to impaired mobility.

**Compliance with Display Screen Equipment training and assessments** within Departments could be better given the availability of training and assessment online. Please ensure all users of PCs are appropriately trained and assessed, and that you have an "Administrator" in your departments to monitor comments made by course users and then take actions as necessary to address concerns raised. But also ask staff to let you know if they have any concerns with their workstations. See <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/safety/online-training>

Additional dates for seminars on "**Dealing with visitors with disabilities**" will be placed on Safety Services Home Page this week.

*Safety Services - working to make your University safer*