

# Safetyline 96

H & S UPDATE DECEMBER 2008

*Checking the **electrical integrity and safety of our portable electrical appliances** is a legal requirement and every Department is required to ensure that all such items are tested at frequencies that reflect the degree of risk of damage to the equipment and its cable. This means that items that are moved frequently or are used in aggressive environments require testing more frequently than those moved rarely and only in offices or other low risk environments. A review of PAT testing is to be undertaken to see if what we're currently doing is appropriate, and if not, to recommend changes that meet the University's needs.*

You may be aware that the HSE have been running a "**Myth of the Month**" campaign for about a year, when they attempt to debunk many of the "myths" that have grown around health and safety activities. The "bonkers conkers" brigade has been using the excuse of "health and safety" to stop activities instead of trying to "manage risks" as the HSE advocate in their "Principles of sensible risk management". The "Myth of the Month archive can be found at the following URL: - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/myth/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/08-sep-2008&cr=5> and HSE's "Principles of sensible risk management" at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principles.htm>

*The Health Protection Agency (HPA) reports that some **energy saving compact fluorescent lights** (CFL's) can emit ultraviolet radiation at levels that can result in exposures higher than guideline levels, but only when sitting closer than 30 cm to the bare light bulb for over 1 hour a day. Where it is necessary for someone to sit near to a CFL for over an hour per day, the HPA advises that either an encapsulated (double envelope) type CFL should be used or the lamp should be moved so that it is at least 30 cm away. Not all open (single envelope) fluorescent light bulbs have significant UVR emissions but if people are in very close proximity to some of them, the exposure to bare skin is like being outside in direct sunlight – no advice has been provided on which types of CFL pose such risks. The larger long tube "strip lighting" design fluorescent lights, commonly used in offices, workplaces and homes for many years, can also be used on ceilings without any special precautionary measures. Exposure to UVR can cause particular problems for people suffering from some medical conditions, including Lupus.*

The **Health and Safety Offences Act 2008** comes into force in January 2009 amending the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974*, and raising the maximum penalties available to the courts for certain health and safety offences. The maximum penalties that can be imposed for breaching health and safety regulations in the lower courts rises from £5,000 to £20,000 and the range of offences for which an individual can be imprisoned has also been broadened.

*For those of you who will be relocating after the Christmas break do keep in mind the need to review the **DSE assessments** for your workstation - the desk and PC you work with – to make sure it is set up in a way that minimises the risks to you. Be sure you know how to alter the settings on your chair so that it is at the right height for you when using your PC. Check that the screen height is correct, that you don't have glare from the screen and that cables are tidy and don't present a trip hazard to the unwary. Speak with your DSE Assessor and Trainer to make sure that your workstation is right for you.*

Only **23 more fun-packed shopping days to Christmas!** Don't forget, no flammable trees and trimmings and make sure they don't obstruct emergency escape routes and doors or fall on the unwary. Pack parcels tidily round the base of trees so they don't trip anyone up. Get your tree lights tested if possible and use an RCD – we don't want any Christmas martyrs this year! If you insist on having a Yule log, make it a chocolate one; and no roasting chestnut at your desk. Turkeys should not be brought into the University unless they are nationally recognized Guide Turkeys when they clearly have a "roll" to play, however, the University will not accept liability for turkeys going missing over the period! Have a wonderful Christmas.

*Safety Services wish you all a very merry Christmas*