

# Safetyline 62

H & S UPDATE FEBRUARY 2006

The **Health and Safety self-audit returns** for 2004/05 indicates that overall health and safety compliance has improved marginally for the higher risk Type 1 departments for the fourth year running. This appears to be due to increased compliance with the requirements for assessing DSE workstations and training DSE users, and more departments indicated that their first aid provision fully meets their needs. The results for Type 2 departments showed a marginal decrease in performance due mainly to a reduction in compliance with DSE requirements and a reduction in the number of departments who were up to date with portable appliance testing although steps were being taken to deal with this deficiency. Overall the picture is good, with compliance for Type 1 departments at 93% and that for Type 2 departments at 88%.

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*Following the concerns many of you in Firth Court expressed about “blue water” in laboratories and washrooms, most of you will be aware that a large sampling programme was undertaken throughout the Firth Court building last July and October to try to determine how extensive the problem was. The results indicated that a significant number of the samples contained concentrations of metals above the regulatory standard though not constituting a health hazard. A consultant was appointed to review the sample results and to determine the probable cause of the problem and to advise the University on how to resolve the problem. The consultants report indicates that the characteristics of the water are such that it is likely to be corrosive to metals in the plumbing system. A meeting was held with Yorkshire Water representatives on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January and they agreed to start their own investigation into the possible causes of the blue water. They visited the Firth Court building on 30<sup>th</sup> January taking water samples from taps for bacteriological quality and copper content, and checking the various water tanks supplying the Firth Court complex. We expect a report on their investigations in early February.*

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Thank you to those of you who returned the **Customer Survey questionnaire** with your comments. We will discuss the issues raised and incorporate the aspects we “can do” into our practices. We have responded to each questionnaire returned. One topic which was raised and which has been raised before is the possibility of setting up a “DSO group” as a forum for exchanging ideas and getting up to date with new and proposed legislation. As there are around 100 departments each with your own DSO, I wonder whether it would be preferable to create 4 DSO groups with similar interests rather than one big group. If you have any views on this I would be grateful for your comments. Please contact [d.g.thomas@sheffield](mailto:d.g.thomas@sheffield) with your comments.

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*A chart explaining the differences between the **Noise at Work Regulations** 1989 and 2006 can be found in the “Regulations” section of the Safety Services web site at the following URL: - <http://www.shef.ac.uk/safety/regulations/noiseregs.pdf>*

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An interesting **prosecution** arose recently when a farm manager was fined £200 with £200 costs for not wearing a helmet while riding a quad bike on the highway, despite there being no legal requirement to do so in the Road Traffic Act. Statistics indicate that 51% of quad bike drivers come off their bikes at some stage, and there have been 21 quad bike fatalities when helmets were not being worn, so the HSE brought the prosecution on the basis that the manager was failing to take reasonable care of himself while at work.

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*A **long working hours culture** drives up the risk of injury and illness, and the risk has nothing to do with how hazardous the job is according to a study in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. The study found the more hours worked the greater the risk was, but lengthy commutes had no impact on the injury/illness rate. Further analysis indicated that the increased risks were not merely the result of demanding work schedules being concentrated in inherently “riskier” industries or jobs.*