

Safetyline 73

H & S UPDATE JANUARY 2007 - Happy New Year to you all

We have received reports from Porters in some of the larger buildings that people are **smoking in toilets**. I would be very grateful if you would remind students periodically after lectures that the University has a policy that all buildings are non-smoking and that they must go outside buildings if they wish to smoke.

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The **next Fire Training Lecture** scheduled for 18th January 2007 will now take place in LT3 in the Mappin Building and not in the Sir Henry Stephenson building as originally stated.

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A recent court case has highlighted the point that **employers are under a statutory duty to ensure that "work equipment" used by employees in the course of their employment is safe, whether it is provided by the employer or not**. The case involved an employee of a firm of architects who occupied part of a rented building, whose arm was injured when trapped by the doors of a lift in which the safety devices which would normally have prevented the door from closing were defective. The trial judge concluded "...a failure by the landlord to properly maintain and inspect the lifts did not absolve an employer from the strict liability nature of the obligation to maintain work equipment in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. The fact that the employer exerted some degree of control over the equipment, by being able to compel the landlord to carry out maintenance, was probably relevant."

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*Around 20 people are killed every year from **carbon monoxide fumes** from household gas appliances. Warning symptoms that people need to look out for include: boiler pilot light flames burning orange instead of blue; sooty stains on or near appliances; excessive condensation in the room; coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out; families suffering prolonged flu-like symptoms. Earlier in the year RoSPA and Corgi joined forces to produce five hard-hitting short films, which feature people who have lost relatives, or who have poisoned themselves. Click here to see the films on-line [http://www.corgi-gas-safety.com/section\\_about/adverts.asp](http://www.corgi-gas-safety.com/section_about/adverts.asp)*

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We've had a report from one department that the steel rod for the back support on one **Wallis 5-star base office chair** (model 3011DC, Pat No: 8908159.0.) recently broke while in use causing the person using the chair to fall backwards off the chair. The chair was purchased in December 1994. In light of this report, it would be prudent to check whether chairs of similar age used for PC work exhibit any indication of stress / discoloration of the steel rod for the back support. If there is evidence of stress, the rods should be replaced if available, or if not, the chair replaced.

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*The London Fire Brigade are lobbying for changes to legislation on the use of **acetylene gas cylinders** following a year in which there were 14 incidents involving acetylene cylinders, 12 requiring full evacuation of premises and one to the closure of a construction site, evacuation of thousands of residents and closure of overland train lines running in and out of Kings Cross Station. In February 2006, the M11 was closed for 24 hours as a result of an incident involving acetylene causing travel chaos and problems for those travelling to and from Stansted Airport. These precautions are considered necessary because fragments from an exploding cylinder can travel over 175 metres prompting the Fire Service to impose a 200 metre exclusion zone at incidents where acetylene cylinder are known to be present.*

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HSE have put the "**List of approved workplace exposure limits**" on their CoSHH microsite which can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/table1.pdf>. The list of Supplementary information can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/table1sup.pdf> and Biological Monitoring Guidance Values at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/table2.pdf>