

Safetyline 127

H & S UPDATE July 2011

One University has recently reported instances of severe skin irritation believed to be caused by exposure to tiny amounts of **Chalcone** in Undergraduate teaching. Relevant MSDS's indicate the substance does cause irritation and is also mutagenic so ensure relevant PPE is used when handling and using Chalcone. Further information can be obtained on the CCOHS website which can be accessed via the Chemical Hazards section of Safety Services website. See gray box on right hand side at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/safety/chemical>

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**Workers are as likely to have an accident in the first six months at a workplace as during the rest of their working life.** *The extra risk arises due to: lack of experience on the job; lack of familiarity with the workplace; reluctance to raise concerns; and eagerness to impress work colleagues and managers. HSE have created a new webpage setting out 6 steps to reduce the risks for new starters, starting with assessing the capability of the individual, a proper workplace and job induction, ensuring the control measures to protect against risk are up to date and are being properly used and maintained, providing relevant information, instruction and training about the risks that new workers may be exposed to and the precautions they will need to take to avoid those risks, providing adequate supervision and lastly, check workers have understood the information, instruction and training they need to work safely, and are acting on it. See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/diversity/new-to-the-job.htm>.*

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Scientists at the Institute of Medicine, in conjunction with collaborators from both the UK and Australia, have published a paper comparing the inflammogenic properties of various types of **carbon nanotubes (CNT)** with control fibres including asbestos. This study confirmed that CNT's of sufficient length, aspect ratio and durability can elicit asbestos-like inflammogenic responses in mice. See <http://www.particleandfibretoxicology.com/content/8/1/15/abstract>

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*Public interest groups and NGOs have called on the EU to include a further 22 endocrine-disrupting chemicals on its existing official list of 54 chemicals which are to be subjected to more detailed scrutiny under **REACH**, and to elevate 356 other substances, currently classified as only potentially dangerous, to the same level. This would result in substances such as phthalates being included on the list of "Substances of Very High Concern". Which require special scrutiny before any such substance listed is authorised.*

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HSE commissioned research has revealed that a significant percentage of **work-related injuries and fatalities are associated with electricity**. Over 3,000 fatalities were reported to HSE under RIDDOR over a 13 year period, of these 40% involved electricity in some way, but 6% were as a direct contact with electricity. Electrical fitters, including electricians, were the group most likely to be killed and suffer non-fatal injuries. Electricity-related deaths were most common in the construction and agriculture sectors, although the engineering and utilities sector suffered the most non-fatal injuries; over 57,000 over the period.

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*There has recently been some more **scare stories about mobile phones** in the press but the scientific consensus is that apart from the increased risk of a road accident due to mobile phone use while driving, there is no clear evidence of adverse health from the use of mobile phones or from phone masts.*

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If you intend to make any changes to activities or processes or substances you use in your buildings, or to occupancy levels or involve physical alterations to the building itself, for example enlarging or splitting rooms, please speak to Safety Services as your planned changes may require the **fire risk assessment** for your building to be reviewed which might require additional fire protection measures to be installed or changes to your fire safety induction for staff and students.