The University Of Sheffield.

Safetyline 99

H & S UPDATE MARCH 2009

*We have recently developed a **checklist to be used when relocating to a new building** to ensure that the various safety implications of the move are considered, such as assembly points, fire alarm testing arrangements, first aid arrangements, normal opening and closing times and out of hours arrangements, emergency telephones etc. This can be found on our website at: - http://safety.dept.shef.ac.uk/guidance/Building%20Relocation%20Checklist.pdf*

~~~~~~

One University Department recently took delivery of 7 oscilloscopes, each was supplied with a removable lead which was PAT tested prior to use, which raised doubts about their electrical integrity. The leads looked normal and each carried a CE mark on the plug-head and cable. However, when cut all 7 cables were found to have copper wires of 30-50% of the thickness they should be, giving a cross-sectional area of copper of between 15% and 43% of that required. The wire sheathing was of non-standard colours and the cable sheath thickened to compensate for the missing copper. As the leads are transferrable between appliances they could have been used with equipment drawing significant currents, e.g. heaters, which could have resulted in the leads overheating and a fire could have occurred. The supplier was informed immediately. This illustrates **the need to check all new electrical equipment prior to use** and a new PAT Policy is shortly to be introduced which will require all departments to check all new electrical equipment upon purchase and prior to use to ensure they are safe to use.

~~~~~~

*"STEP" – a **slips and trips, free on line, eLearning package** is available now to support HSE's Shattered Lives Campaign 2009. STEP is an e-Learning package providing slip and trip guidance. It is an easy way to learn about slips and trips, their causes, how to prevent them and why stopping them is important. You will find it useful whatever your level of expertise, and wherever you work. STEP contains all you need to train others. Please click this link to get full access to STEP: - http://www.hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives/index.htm*

~~~~~~

The link below from a US law firm report an example of someone making a successful claim, for **injuries suffered due to the type of laboratory coat worn**. A technician, wearing a laboratory coat made of 65% polyester, 35% cotton blend material, was mixing 15% acetone and spinach. The mixture ignited her lab coat resulting in third degree burns to chest, breast, upper arms and shoulders. The evidence proved the manufacturer and retailer failed to warn users that the material should not be exposed to flames or intense heat. The plaintiff claimed that the coat would have been safer had it been made of 100% polyester or 100% cotton. When exposed to heat or flammable substances, flame could be extinguished more easily with 100% cotton coat and 100% polyester or other flame retardant designs. The blended material prevented the fabric from falling apart and caused the melting polyester to keep close to the skin increasing the severity and depth of the burns and scarring the plaintiff suffered. The Procurement section will be seeking views from user Departments with the intention of sourcing alternative types of laboratory coats for Central Stores in the light of this report. Investigations by Procurement have found that no laboratory coats are fire-retardant, as the substance conferring this characteristic will wash off when laundered. See http://www.galfandberger.com/aop/Products-Liability/Flammable-Clothing/.

~~~~~~

*Universities are reporting **problems with scientific equipment supplied from Europe**. Examples include a new -80^{o}C freezer that was fitted with a European 2 pin plug which had been incorrectly fitted into a 'Powerconnections' scp3 adaptor. The European plug had been fitted into the adapter incorrectly, reversing live and neutral and the 2-pin plug was poorly located into the adapter. Not only had the adaptor been installed with reverse polarity but the earth connection "wipe" joint had become disconnected within the adaptor making the plug unsafe. A fused, standard 3-pin plug was fitted to the freezer and checks confirmed that the freezer was then electrically safe. Similar adaptors have been found on water baths and desk-mounted centrifuges. Adapters of this type should be replaced by a fused 3-pin plug by a competent electrician prior to use.*