

Safetyline 65

H & S UPDATE MAY 2006

With warmer weather now on the way, don't forget that wedging cross-corridor doors to improve ventilation will put people at significant risk in the event of a fire. However, we are able to offer means of propping open cross-corridor fire doors which release and close the doors in the event of a fire alarm. "**Doorguard**" is an electronically controlled, battery powered prop which is attached to the bottom of a fire door. The batteries last around a year. We have a few units, but unfortunately must recharge departments should they wish to have one fitted following an assessment of the risks associated with the proposed location. The cost is £152.50 per unit, inclusive of VAT and fixing. Operating and battery replacement instructions will be provided.

~~~~~  
*The effectiveness of the weekly **fire alarm testing** regime relies on all of us reporting any faults or audibility issues that are noted to Estates Help Desk as soon as possible to enable Property Services to investigate and rectify any defects as quickly as possible.*

~~~~~  
You may have spotted recent reports that symptoms long blamed on "**Sick Building Syndrome**" are linked to long hours, poor management and lack of support at work rather than poor air quality. The British Medical Journal report stated "*the only area of the physical environment that had a significant effect on health was in control over the desk space. If employees could choose what lighting and heat they worked in they were less likely to report symptoms*" which include headaches, coughs, tired eyes, runny noses, lethargy, dry and sore throats and wheezing.

~~~~~  
*Researchers at the Headache Institute in Curitiba, Brazil report that computer screens may be a **migraine trigger**, and that changing the screen frequency to 75Hz or higher, through a Windows command, could reduce migraine attacks for those who are very sensitive to light. There is evidence that migraineurs have a lower threshold for the fusion of flickering light and that by increasing the frequency of artificial light sources could prevent migraine attacks.*

~~~~~  
A hotel manager was recently fined £18,000 following a massive blaze, for **failing to comply with basic fire precautions regulations**. These precautions included failure to: - maintain external escape routes properly; keep the means of escape free from obstruction; keep a log book recording details of tests, examinations and fire drill instruction, and failure to provide workers with proper instruction and training and to maintain proper training records. One man had to kick his way through a fire door because a wheelie bin was wedged against it, and a single bed blocked another escape route. This incident emphasises the importance of ensuring escape routes are clear and that alarm tests and fire drills are held regularly.

~~~~~  
*During the first two months of 2006 we experienced a reduction in the number of **false fire alarm calls** to the Fire service, but this increased significantly in March and they are again questioning what we are to do to reduce numbers. An Action plan has been drafted for submission to the Health and safety Committee in May, but we do urge you to remain vigilant and avoid actions that could activate detectors in your work area.*

~~~~~  
Over the past few months we have received several expressions of concern regarding the presence of **children on University premises**. The instances causing concern generally involve parents bringing children onto University premises when not part of an event organised by the University or other institution. In view of these concerns, we have drafted a guidance document for consideration by the Health and Safety Committee, which we expect be available in the very near future, to help parents understand what is expected of them and to assist departments to manage these situations.

~~~~~  
**Smoke-free workplaces by summer 2007.** After months of debate, MP's have finally voted for a total ban on smoking in all public spaces, including workplaces like offices, pubs, bars and restaurants. This decision upholds and strengthens the University's policy on smoking.