

# Safetyline 82

H & S UPDATE OCTOBER 2007

A couple of months ago **Contractors** who were not working for the University excavated a hole at the rear of one of our buildings making a fire exit unusable. The Contractors had not consulted with the University and the hole was only discovered when staff attempted to use the fire exit during a fire evacuation. Please do be vigilant and let Estates Services or Safety Services know immediately if you have any concerns about Contractor works around your building that might impact on your safety. Ring Estates Helpdesk on 29100 or Safety Services on 26198

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*A safety concern circulating on one e-mail network relates to the spontaneous ignition of a finely powdered metal in air. Many **pure metals** in powder form can ignite spontaneously when exposed to air due to rapid oxidation of the metal; examples are Cobalt, Nickel & Aluminium. When handling such powders ensure an inert atmosphere is maintained to prevent ignition.*

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An **on-line DSE training and assessment package** can be found at the URL below. Although this is not an official "University" training site, it does provide useful information on how to set up and use DSE equipment including the chair and workstation, and would be useful for those who have yet to be formally assessed by a DSE Assessor in your own workplace. A certificate is printed for those completing it. <http://www.rossiterandco.com/VDU-Health-and-Safety/Index.htm>

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*So far in 2007 the number of unwanted **fire alarm activations** is slightly down on the equivalent period in 2006, and last year we saw a 40% drop in activations from 2005. Thanks to you all for your vigilance and cooperation in continuing to reduce the number of activations.*

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We're getting to that time of year when the demand for **Out of Hours courses** will rise dramatically and exercise our ability to satisfy your requirements. Don't forget that we do offer the option of training willing and certificated First Aiders to undertake this training should you wish. The "Train the Trainer" course is a 1-day course and if you wish to know more about it speak to Anne Willcox on Extn 26100.

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*The **health and safety self-audit questionnaire** was sent to all Heads of Department and Departmental management in early September and to date we have received 10 returns, to which I will respond shortly. Please do arrange to complete and return these by the end of this month as the results of this survey are reported to the Health and Safety Committee, and Departments failing to respond will be chased for their return. Thanks.*

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**HSE's Myth of the month.** In August HSE addressed the myth that egg boxes are banned in school craft lessons as they might cause salmonella. Advice from County Councils state that as long as egg boxes or toilet roll centres look clean there is no reason why they should not be used. The September myth is the one about children having to wear safety goggles when playing conkers. HSE's view is the risks are so low that they're not worth bothering with, and that if one child hits another over the head with a conker it's a disciplinary issue, not health and safety.

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*For overseas postgraduate students wishing to do Out of Hours training, English Language Teaching Centre have produced a **vocabulary** for the course which attendees should be encouraged to study before attending the course in order to recognise the sounds and meaning of the "first aid" jargon used during the course. <http://www.shef.ac.uk/safety/training/vocab.pdf>*

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I've recently come across a report that **interactive whiteboards** (and other electronic devices) can be damaged by static electricity discharges. In one instance a Van der Graff Generator being operated close to a whiteboard damaged the board's circuitry and it had to be replaced.

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The **annual Fire Drills** start on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October and will continue through to Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October. We apologise in advance for any inconvenience this causes.

*Safety Services - working to make your University safer*