

Safetyline 57

H & S UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2005

Following discussions with the Fire Service, 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 purchased 10 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.

A 1999 study at the Motherisk Programme at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children showed an increased risk of birth defects in children born to **mothers with occupational exposure to organic solvents during pregnancy**. A follow-up study in 2004 by the University of Toronto suggests that exposure to organic solvents may be associated with poor child performance on some measures of neurocognitive function, language and behaviour. The study looked at 32 women who reported being exposed to a range of organic solvents in the workplace for up to 8 weeks of pregnancy starting in the first trimester. In view of the small number of participants this study cannot be taken as definitive.

Diane Hall (Di) has joined Safety Services from her previous role as Senior Technician in the School of Biomedical Sciences at the Medical School, Nottingham. She will replace Chris Peace, who leaves us at the end of September, as Health & Safety Trainer / Biological Safety Adviser.

New legislation to help employers and employees avoid risks from **vibration in the workplace** came into force on 6th July. To help employers assess the likelihood of their employees exceeding the new exposure action or limit values the HSE has published a series of guidance leaflets which provide advice on practical actions employers can take to control the risk, stressing the importance of simple common-sense measures to reduce exposure. A transitional period has been allowed for the exposure limit values until 2010 and in the case of whole-body exposures in the agricultural and forestry sectors, until 2014. The leaflets can be found on the HSE website: "Control the risks from hand-arm vibration" INDG175 (rev2) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg175.pdf ; "Hand-arm vibration" INDG296(rev1) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg296.pdf ; "Control back pain risks from whole body vibration" INDG242 (rev1) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg242.pdf ; Drive away bad back" INDG 404 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg404.pdf .

East Anglian Ambulance Service have launched a **national "In Case of Emergency" (ICE) campaign** with the support of Falklands war hero Simon Weston and in association with Vodafone's annual life savers award. The idea is that you store the word "ICE" in your mobile phone address book and against it enter the number of the person you would want to be contacted in an emergency. This simple action would allow Emergency Services personnel to contact next of kin quickly. For more than one contact use ICE1, ICE2 etc.

There is a bit of a debate going on at the moment that health and safety not become a "bureaucratic paper chase" nor an excuse for managers to cover their backs. This results from reports of **health and safety "going mad"** which are fuelled by the media and because the insurance industry is becoming more risk averse. HSE are concerned about this trend and are starting a public debate, to ensure that their decisions are interpreted correctly and do not lead to a frenzy of risk aversion measures which will hinder rather than help industry. In light of this, we no longer feel it appropriate to insist that conker players must wear head, eye and knuckle protection or that First Aiders (with defibrillator units) be present during inter-faculty conker championships. Please refer to your mother in the event of injury.

"Cube adapters" should not be used for increasing the number of electrical points available from a single socket outlet. Only fused adapters on short cables should be used. These are obtainable from Stores. The PAT testers are reporting that they are coming across several foreign made adapters being brought into the country by students from abroad, which are not safe and should not be used. If you have doubts about extension adapters either replace them or get them checked by an electrician.