

New first aid training courses

On 1st October 2009 the Health and Safety Executive will implement important changes to the First Aid at Work Regulations, primarily with regard to training courses for first aiders. The new First Aid at Work course will be shortened to three days, instead of four, and a new course has been introduced, called Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW).

The University is not required to retrain all its first aiders. First aiders with a valid first aid at work (FAW) certificate will only enter the new arrangements when their certificate expires. Requalification courses for First Aiders will last two days and be valid for 3 years. However HSE also strongly recommend annual refresher training (3 hours) to prevent 'skills fade'.



EFAW courses will last one day and be valid for 3 years. Annual refreshers of basic skills are also recommended.

The implications of the new arrangements will be discussed with the Health and Safety Committee (in particular the implications for Appointed Persons to be replaced by EFAW) and with the University's first aid training provider. However it is likely that the role of Appointed Person will be replaced by staff with the EFAW qualification. Staff who are currently Appointed Persons will be able to continue until their training expires.

Anyone with any queries about training/retraining or local first aid arrangements should contact Health and Safety Services.

New H&S web site

The Health and Safety Services web site has now been rebranded and redesigned to fit the University CMS model. The new address is:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/hs-home-2.aspx>

Please make sure you bookmark the new address. While much of the site has similar content to our old site, we have tried to make it easier to navigate and to find essential resources. Please let us know if there are still areas that can be improved, or if there are any teething problems!

Many thanks are due to our team administrator, Beccy, who has done all the hard work to redesign the web site.

Burning of waste

There are strict laws governing the disposal of industrial and domestic waste. These include the need for a permit for disposal, or an exemption authorised by the Environment Agency. When H&SS were investigating a fire on farmland recently, it emerged that contractors were in breach of waste legislation.

Anyone disposing of waste must do so via an approved waste disposal route - see Campus Services web http://www.fmd.reading.ac.uk/For_University_staff/Campus_services/Waste/Disposal_guide/Default.aspx#special. Alternatively it may be possible to apply for an exemption for low risk activities. Where contractors generate the waste, they must agree the disposal route with the University. It is NOT permitted to burn waste on University land unless this has been approved in advance and an exemption has been obtained. Even with an exemption, only certain types of waste can be burnt, within strict limits. For example, wood must be burned on the land where it is produced, by the producer, and the total quantity burned in any period of 24 hours must not exceed 10 tonnes. It is not permissible to move the waste to another site.

Health and Safety Services
Governance Directorate

Extension 8888

Web: www.fmd.reading.ac.uk/

Email: safety@reading.ac.uk

Contact: Moira Simpson, Head of
Health and Safety Services

Malcolm Iosson retires

Malcolm Iosson, our Biological and Radiation Safety Officer, retires at the end of September. After a total of 33 years at the University, I am sure you will join with me in wishing Malcolm a long and happy retirement.

Malcolm joined the University as a Lecturer in Microbiology on 1 October 1970, based at London Road. He left in 1990 to join HSE as a specialist inspector, in the field (literally) of genetic modification. In 1996 he came back to campus, this time in the role of Biological Safety Adviser. He has set up management systems for biological and radiation safety, and contributed generously of his expert knowledge across a wide range of scientific topics. His boots will be difficult to fill. He is now planning to turn his energy to his several hobbies, which include gardening, walking and travel.

During August and September Malcolm will be handing over to Dr Greta Roberts, who joins us on 3 August. Greta is coming from Imperial College, where she has worked as a Safety Co-ordinator in the Department of Biosurgery and Surgical Technology. She has a PhD and considerable postgraduate research experience in Medical Microbiology. She is looking forward to new challenges, not least expanding her technical knowledge into new areas.

Cars in hot weather

During the last spell of hot weather, there were several cases in the UK of animals being left in vehicles and perishing. It is therefore important that we take care that this does not happen on our campuses.

Without the car ventilation system being on, the rise in temperature and the lack of circulating air can very quickly overcome a small body such as an animal; providing plenty of water is not a solution. The temperature inside a closed car in hot weather can rise to over 40°C within 20 minutes.

'I was only planning on being only a few minutes' is frequently cited and that may be the intention; however, none of us can tell if we will be delayed by circumstances beyond our control.

Do not leave your dog unattended in a car, even with the window open and water available. Remember that animals are not allowed in University buildings, with the exception of guide or hearing dogs, so please make arrangements for your pet to remain at home or with someone who can look after it while you are at work.

Never pass by a dog if you see one suffering in a car. Make sure you let someone in authority know e.g. University Security, and if in doubt call the police or the RSPCA.

Note, the risk of being overcome by heat also applies to young children; but we would hope that, for a variety of reasons, parents do not leave children unattended in cars on campus.

Fire safety upgrades

The fire safety upgrade is well under way. Inevitably this means some noise and disruption, for which we apologise. However the final aim is to ensure that our buildings are as fire safe as we can reasonably make them. By ensuring that they have up to date fire alarm systems, escape lighting, disabled refuges, fire signage and structural protection to escape stairways, we can ensure that the fire risk rating is reduced to a tolerable level.



The University will also be shortly embarking on a programme of works to provide 'refuges' in buildings where mobility impaired people can access upper floors by using a lift. The refuges will be protected and will be complete with two way communication devices. They are intended to be used as a place of relative safety while a fire situation is assessed, and prior to

evacuation out of the building.

If you are working in a building that is being fire upgraded you may notice that you now have a fire detector installed in your office or work space. These are state of the art, multi-functional devices that not only detect the presence of fire through smoke or heat sensors, but will also broadcast to you a warning of fire. Some buildings such as the Library will have a voice message warning of fire rather than a conventional siren. This is because voice alarms are more effective in influencing people's early movement towards a fire exit and to a subsequent place of safety.



The additional fire detection means that there is always a risk of having false alarms. These can be caused by e.g. **steam** from a kettle, **smoke** from burnt toast or food from a microwave and **aerosols** sprayed in close proximity.



Please do your bit in helping to prevent false alarms by being aware of these common causes. For instance make sure your kettles, toasters and microwaves are used only in kitchen

areas or tea points where the type of detection will be compatible with the use of the space.

As always, if more information is needed about the fire upgrade programme please contact our Fire Safety Advisor on Ext 8888 or email firesafety@reading.ac.uk.

Swine flu

The University has published guidance on swine flu for staff and students on its web site. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below for staff are in response to the types of issues that may arise over the summer and into the autumn term.

1) Where can I find up-to-date information?

The University website is updated whenever more information becomes available. Email cascades will be used if we need to communicate with large numbers of staff at short notice. The website should always be your first port of call. Where possible the web site will refer you to official information e.g. NHS Choices or the Health Protection Agency (HPA) to ensure you get the most up to date information.

2) Will the University close at any point?

Only if the situation becomes untenable will the University close completely. It is anticipated that this would only happen if advised to do so by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) or the HPA. It is more likely that individual buildings, services or departments might need to close temporarily – this would only be done if staff or student levels dropped substantially for a period of time.

3) What should I tell students if they ask about swine flu?

That the University has comprehensive plans in place to deal with the situation. They should keep looking at the University website for information. If there was an outbreak at the University they would be issued with information, either when they arrive at the University if the pandemic has already impacted on normal operations, or when there are more than a few isolated cases, if this happens after the start of term.

4) Who is responsible for increasing cleaning regimes? Who will do this if lots of cleaners go off sick?

FMD are drawing up plans on how to manage if a large number of cleaning staff are affected. This will include potentially using agency staff. However staff may wish to set up their own cleaning regime of wiping down their own door handles, keyboards, telephones, etc. Schools/ Directorates can request basic cleaning consumables (disposable cloths/wipes, household cleaning products) from Campus Services.

5) Do staff in front line services need PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) such as gloves or face masks?

In the vast majority of circumstances no additional PPE is required by staff or students. In particular the use of face masks is not considered necessary or advisable. What is advised is that everyone follows the 'Catch It – Kill It – Bin It' advice and steps up their own personal hygiene by washing hands frequently, not touching their face, eyes, mouth or nose after touching anything that is potentially contaminated, and using hand gel wherever normal hand washing facilities are not available. Staff must not struggle into work if they are ill. Only staff who may be expected to enter a room where an ill person is or has been present (such as a cleaner or tutor in Halls) would be offered a face mask due to the potential for close contact. However it is more effective if the sick person wears a face mask - to be used once only, then bagged and disposed of in the domestic waste.

6) Where can I get supplies of hand gel and cleaning wipes for my office / building / school?

Contact Campus Services. Individuals may wish to buy their own supplies of hand gel for personal use at work and home. You will find these in most supermarkets or pharmacies.

7) What should I do if I fall into one of the 'at risk' groups that the media keep talking about?

If you have any medical concerns you should speak to your GP. You should also make your Line Manager aware that you fall into one of these groups so that they can consider whether they can alter work patterns or allocate other members of staff to activities that might put you at increased risk. This will also allow them to notify you if any close work colleagues become ill. It is important to note that this may not always be possible, but the University does understand that swine flu may cause you some anxiety.

8) Will we be notified of which buildings have had cases of swine flu reported?

Unfortunately as the situation progresses this will not be practical – people suspected as having swine flu are not being tested and as such anyone with an influenza like illness could potentially have the virus. The expected increase in the overall numbers of people becoming unwell means that there may be suspected cases in most buildings at some point during the autumn (if national predictions are accurate). Therefore the best approach is to ask all staff to be aware of the situation, to monitor the website for updated information, and to keep following the hygiene advice from the NHS.

9) What will happen if we do not have enough staff to continue normal teaching/research/work/services?

Your School or Directorate should implement its pandemic plan. The Head of School/Directorate should inform the University Major Incident Team. A decision will be made as to whether additional support can be given, or whether the School, department, or office should temporarily close.

10) How can we carry on working if the pandemic does affect us? Can staff work from home?

If staff roles allow them to work from home then this will not be discouraged. However Schools have been asked to think in advance about what this means and about what staff are likely to need at home to be able to work successfully e.g. means of communication and accessing information. ITS will be issuing guidance on this shortly. School pandemic plans address other issues such as covering lectures, alternative teaching timetables, identifying key members of staff without whom courses or services cannot be delivered, and identifying non-essential work that can be put on hold.

11) How will the University/School/Directorate stay in contact with students and staff if they are sent home?

There are several ways that this can be achieved – emails, University or School websites, even good old fashioned letters through the post, and possibly providing students with direct work contact details for their lecturers and tutors so they can speak to them directly. Managers and supervisors will also be asked to keep in contact with staff to check how they are and monitor the number of staff who are ill or need to remain at home for other reasons e.g. to look after other family members who are ill.

Swine Flu: What can you do?



Swine flu is spreading fast in the UK with several hundred new cases being confirmed daily. Prepare now:

- Establish a network of "flu friends" - friends and relatives - who can help if you fall ill. They could, for example, collect medicines and food for you
- Make sure that you have an adequate amount of paracetamol-based cold remedies in the house in case you become ill
- If possible, have a thermometer available so you can check your temperature if you need to

Good hygiene—Preventing the spread of germs is the single most effective way to slow the spread of diseases such as swine flu. You should always:

- Ensure everyone washes their hands regularly with soap and water
- Clean surfaces regularly to get rid of germs
- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- Place used tissues in a bin as soon as possible

More information on how the University is planning for swine flu is available on our website:
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staff/news/staff-pandemic-flu-guidelines.asp>

Source: NHS Choices