

## Fire risk assessment improvements

**All University Building should have a current Fire Risk Assessment. These are carried out by our Fire Safety Advisor on a rolling programme. From September two new sections have been added: Arson Prevention and Fire Safety Management.**

Arson or deliberately set fires account for almost half the fires that occur in the UK. It is the most common single cause of fire in non-domestic premises. Some types of premises, such as schools, are particularly prone to arson. However arson is an important cause of fire in buildings to which members of the public have 'open' access. Here at the University we have experienced deliberately set fires in wooded areas close to our buildings. A couple of years ago the cricket scoreboard was burnt down. These may seem minor events but we need to be aware that when we allow easy access to campus buildings we are at risk. The new section of the fire risk assessment will formalise our recognition of arson risks and should result in measures being taken to reduce the opportunity for an attack.



Here is a picture taken recently that shows an easy opportunity for an arsonist to strike. There are overflowing, unlocked waste bins too close to a building

and also located at the bottom of external fire escape stairs.

### Fire Safety Management

To be effective the management of fire safety needs to be ongoing and routine. The University fire safety management system is not reliant on one single person. We rely on input from a range of organisations and functions. These include FMD for building maintenance, training providers including Health and Safety Services, Area Health and Safety Co-ordinators and Fire Wardens. The University has recently appointed Building Managers and one of their key roles is to ensure that all these strands are co-ordinated.

If you would like more information about fire risk assessments or any other aspect of fire safety please contact [firesafety@reading.ac.uk](mailto:firesafety@reading.ac.uk) or telephone Ext 8282.

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## Asbestos framework partners

**The University has appointed two framework partners to provide asbestos consultancy services, Redhill Analysts and Envirochem Analytical Laboratories Ltd. Between them, they will undertake asbestos surveys as the need arises across the University's portfolio of properties. They will also support asbestos remediation projects with air-testing, clearances and project management.**

In addition, the University has appointed three contracting companies to provide asbestos abatement services, European Asbestos Services Ltd, Cranegates Ltd and The Erith Group. All three are leaders within the industry and, with the support of Redhills and Envirochem, they will ensure that any work with asbestos will continue to be dealt with professionally and effectively. The Duty to Manage asbestos is one of our core health and safety responsibilities and these appointments, valid for four years, demonstrate the continuing commitment to achieving excellence. The University Asbestos Co-ordinator, Sean Callaghan has overall responsibility for advising the University on its asbestos management plan, and he will be supported by these appointments. If you have any concerns about asbestos please do not hesitate to call Sean Callaghan, Asbestos Co-ordinator on 0118 378 8275 or email [s.j.callaghan@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.callaghan@reading.ac.uk).

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# Winter driving

With winter approaching it's worth taking a bit of time to think about the changes we need to make to ensure safe driving. The UK weather can change from autumnal to freezing winter overnight. Therefore, we should take the opportunity to prepare our vehicles whilst the weather is still relatively mild. Here are some of the things to consider.

## Maintenance:

- Check your lights, if a bulb has blown, replace it. It is reasonable to assume that the life of both headlights is similar and if one has blown the other may not be far behind.
- Check that your radiator anti-freeze and the screen wash are suitable for winter. Many of the modern screen washes are designed to not freeze up, which is essential for having a clear windscreen.
- Winter driving can be very hard on windscreen wipers so consider changing them if they are not providing a smooth vision area.
- If your windscreen is smeared with oils from road spray, use a little vinegar to clean it.
- Make sure your demister works and have an ice scraper to hand.
- Check your tyres pressure and tread depth. Although the legal tread depth is 1.6mm, police forces do not allow their own vehicles to have less than 3mm tread - the comparable difference in stopping distance at 50mph is 2 car lengths.

## Driving:

- Traffic flows are much slower between November and May. Allow up to 30% more time for winter journeys.
- Winter and early spring sunshine can be a particular hazard; sunglasses can protect you from low sun angles or light reflecting off wet or icy roads.
- Always dress for the bad weather; never rely on the car heater. If your car breaks down you may have to walk in the cold, hang around on the motorway verge, or risk exposure and a crash by staying in the car. Keep a blanket in the car for other occupants.
- Never leave children or pets in cars during the winter; a child or small pet will be affected badly by the cold if they are unable to move around, and the temperature inside a car drops very quickly when the heater is turned off.

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# Risk assessment review

Thank you for forwarding your risk assessments this year. To ensure that the standards of risk assessment are maintained and to provide any help needed we are sampling risk assessments from selected departments, and discussing these with local AHSCs.

This will provide individual specific advice and information and feedback. Key weaknesses already identified already at audit regarding risk assessment include:

- Not stating who will carry out further actions and providing a date for completion
- Not referring to more detailed assessments and safe systems of work / procedures
- Not identifying who is affected by the hazards i.e. specific staff, members of the public.
- Not implementing the controls!

We run risk assessment training and manual handling risk assessment training. More advice is available in Safety Guide 4:

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

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# First aid at work

**The new recognised first aid certificated course of emergency first aid at work (EFAW) has been launched and the HSE have reissued their Approved Code of Practice and guidance. This provides Schools/Directorates with the opportunity to review their first aid needs.**

Results from recent audits have found that some areas do not have adequate numbers of first aiders. The introduction of the new one day EFAW course will make it easier for staff who struggled to find four days to attend the full first aid at work course to attend EFAW instead. The EFAW will replace the University course for appointed persons and is an accredited first aid qualification.

For higher risk workplaces the full First Aid at Work certificate will still be required, but the course is now reduced to three days. Annual refreshers are strongly recommended.

All employers have a duty to ensure that adequate first aid arrangements are in place. Heads of School and Directorates should ensure that a first aid needs assessment has been undertaken which covers all their staff (and students). H&SS will be re-issuing Safety Guide 8 *First Aid*, in early December, at which point Schools/Directorates should complete their reviews.

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# Swine flu supplies

**Cleaning Services have a selection of products on offer to help with the fight against swine flu.**

Steri wipes, hand gel and dispensers are available to purchase and can be ordered in quantities to suit departments. For more information or to order call extn 8976 or email

[cleaning@reading.ac.uk](mailto:cleaning@reading.ac.uk).

## Health and Safety Services

Governance Directorate

Extension 8888

Web: [www.fmd.reading.ac.uk/](http://www.fmd.reading.ac.uk/)

Email: [safety@reading.ac.uk](mailto:safety@reading.ac.uk)

Contact: Moira Simpson, Head of Health and Safety Services