

Driving at work

Driving is the most hazardous work activity that many people do. About 300 people in the UK are killed or seriously injured every week in crashes involving someone who was “at work”. The University has a responsibility to manage these risks, so far as reasonably practical.

Most of us drive for work, albeit on an occasional basis to go to a conference or meeting. Some staff drive more regularly, for example collecting or delivering samples for research, or driving students on fieldwork trips. In the eyes of the law, and the insurance companies, this is all classed as driving for work.

The University has agreed new procedures for managing the risk to staff, and the university, of a driving accident.

Occasional drivers

If you drive occasionally, and use your own car, you MUST have insurance for business use. This applies even if you do not claim mileage allowance for your journey. You must have a valid licence and meet the medical criteria for driving. Your car must be maintained in a safe condition and where necessary have an MOT certificate. It is your responsibility to check that you can legally drive; the university reserves the right to make checks, but will not normally do so unless there are safety concerns.

If you use a hire car, you will be covered by university insurance, but you must present your licence for checking by your School or department.

University Drivers

Drivers are considered to be ‘University Drivers’ when:

- They drive university vehicles; or
- Driving is part of their normal job; or
- They drive students on official visits as part of an academic course.

University Drivers must:

- have their licences checked to ensure that they are entitled to drive and are not identified as being at high risk by virtue of e.g. the number of points on their licence;

- attend a short training workshop (Safe Culture workshop, which promotes defensive driving techniques and greater awareness);
- confirm that they meet the medical standards for driving by completing a simple questionnaire.

H&SS will be organising Safe Culture workshops for car drivers. Where staff drive minibuses, tractors, fork lift trucks, or tow, a higher standard of driving competence is required, and H&SS will facilitate essential specialist training.

Other staff who drive regularly and who may benefit from defensive driving training can be nominated for the Safe Culture workshop – in particular staff who are younger or inexperienced.

University vehicles

Maintenance of university vehicles is now organised through Wessex Fleet Solutions. See their web site at – <http://www.wessexfleetcorporate.co.uk/>. User name and password information is available from Health & Safety Services; Procurement; or Wessex Fleet Solutions, telephone number 01722 322888.

Wessex will monitor the condition of vehicles and service requirements, and arrange repairs. Schools/Departments need to complete a **monthly** check of safety related items on their vehicle(s), and enter the results onto Wessex’s on-line database. Brief daily checks are also required.

Wessex also provide a licence checking service as part of their contract (2 nominated drivers per vehicle).

Schools/Directorates will be responsible for implementing the new procedures, which are now published on H&SS web site (Driving for Work Purposes Policy and Procedures). In many cases the sole requirement will be to draw drivers’ attention to the requirement for business insurance, and to the Driving for Work Purposes Policy and Procedures document.

The procedures document also draws attention to on-road safety issues such as towing; loading of vehicles; licence requirements for driving minibuses; pre-use vehicle checks; and **policy on use of mobile phones (DON’T)**. Drivers should familiarise themselves with the sections that apply to them.

Health and Safety Services
Governance Directorate

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Laboratory access control

Following consultation with a number of building managers and Area Health & Safety Co-ordinators, and approval by the University Health and Safety Committee, a programme to control access to laboratories and workshops is to be introduced across the University.

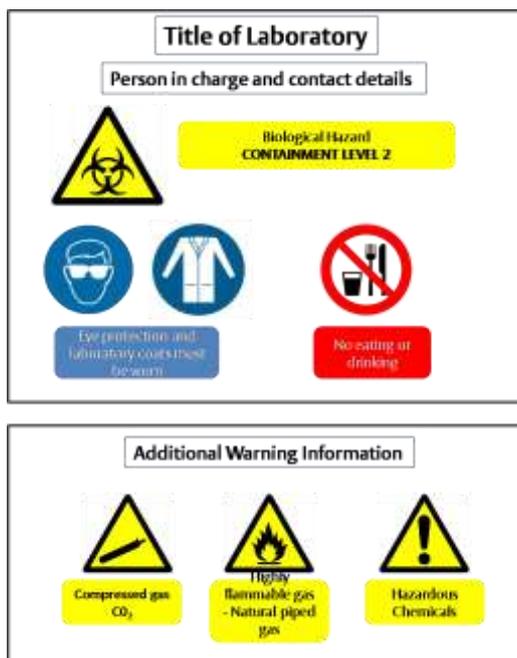
A simple permit to work system for all non-routine cleaning, and maintenance and contract work in laboratories and workshops has been running successfully in the School of Biological Sciences for over a year. This will be extended to other Schools, with the objective of ensuring that FMD staff and contractors can work safely in areas where there are risks with which they are unfamiliar.

In parallel, a colour coding access system will be introduced for routine and emergency work by cleaning, security and maintenance staff. All laboratories and workshops will be colour coded [yellow (limited access), amber (restricted), red (highly restricted)].



The ability of cleaning, security and maintenance staff to enter these areas under routine and emergency conditions have been defined, so that they will be able to tell at a glance from a colour coded sign on the lab door that they are allowed to enter, or not. Designation of rooms as amber or red will be with the agreement of Health and Safety Services. The intention is to introduce the permit to work and the access control system this term.

A guidance note and template for laboratory and workshop door signage is also being introduced in order to standardise the information available to staff, students, visitors and emergency services. An example is given below.



Event notification

A new event notification and approval system has been introduced, to provide event organisers with a single point of contact when they need to notify an event. The new procedures are described in **Safety Guide 33 Event Management**.

When planning for larger events, organisers previously had to contact Health and Safety Services, Facilities Management Directorate (FMD) (for Security, Maintenance, Grounds, Commercial Services etc), and the Corporate Relations and Events Office to check University requirements. To simplify this process there is now a centralised event notification and approval system.

If your event requires notification and approval, send an Event Notification form by email to: event.approval@reading.ac.uk.

Events require approval if they:

- Supply alcohol;
- Play live or recorded music;
- Have higher risk equipment such as inflatables, fairground equipment, or fireworks;
- Involve high risk activities
- Are held in the campus grounds;
- OR will be attended by substantial numbers of people (e.g. 50 for departmental events, 300+ for Halls or Sports events).

The notification form must be submitted at least 28 days before the planned date. This is to allow time to check that there are no clashes with other events, ensure adequate staff will be available e.g. Security, and give organisers time to meet any safety and licensing requirements, such as applying to the local council for a temporary event notice. The form will be distributed to the relevant university departments, their comments will be collated, and event organisers will receive a co-ordinated reply.

Full details of the procedures and copies of Safety Guide 33 can be found on the H&SS web site. The notification form is on the forms page:

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

Audit programme

Health & Safety Services' audit programme for 2010-2011, including a number of specialist audits, has been published and the Schools and units involved are listed below.

- School of Human and Environmental Sciences – completed Nov 2010
- Academic Services (including a review of the library and collections) – Feb or Aug 2011
- CfAM – February 2011
- Faculty of Social Sciences – Mar 2011
- School of Systems Engineering – Apr 2011

- School of Humanities – May 2011
- Facilities Management Directorate – Estates (including audit review of Maintenance and Business Services) – July 2011

Specialist Audits

- Pressure/Gas – December 2010
- Local Exhaust Ventilation – Spring 2011
- Workshops – Spring 2011
- Vice Chancellors office June 2011

For areas previously audited, Health and Safety Services have agreed to follow up actions on a 6 to 12 monthly basis and the results of these, along with any outstanding actions, will be reported to Deans via the University Health and Safety Committee.

Working with hazardous biological agents

The system for authorisation/registration of projects involving hazardous biological agents has been extended to include all such active work on campus.

All workers with hazardous biological agents will be required to register with Health and Safety Services and complete an Occupational Health medical questionnaire.

The restriction on undergraduate and taught postgraduate students working on hazardous biological agents has been lifted, subject to adequate supervision being provided.

A standard for Phlebotomy facilities has also been agreed; a key change is that blood taking is prohibited in laboratory settings.

Evacuation chairs

The University has allocated funds to enable an initial purchase of Stairway Emergency Evacuation Chairs. When these are allocated to buildings, volunteers will be needed to be trained to use the chairs to assist with the evacuation of disabled people. Health and Safety Services will be running ‘taster sessions’ where potential volunteers can try the chairs in action.



The chairs are one of a limited number of options to evacuate disabled people from buildings, where the disabled person is unable to negotiate stairs to get out the building. Disabled people who cannot self-evacuate will be advised to make their way to a fire refuge, where they can use the intercomm system to make their presence known to those

managing the evacuation. Fire Wardens are also asked to check refuges when sweeping the building. The disabled person will then need help to evacuate down the adjacent protected stairwell.

The chairs are simple to use, can be operated by a single person, and do not entail any manual handling. They slide down the stairs on friction runners, that stop the chair accelerating down the stairs.

All volunteers will be provided with proper training. Typically we are looking for Fire Wardens or First Aiders to volunteer but in practice anyone can use a chair, male or female. The only requirement is that you are able bodied.

If you think that you may be interested in becoming a volunteer, contact H&SS, or watch out for information about ‘taster’ sessions in the new year. Chairs will initially be provided in buildings that have been ‘risk assessed’ for having an immediate need for a chair. If your building is not equipped with a chair, no volunteers will be needed.

With your help, we can make sure that all persons can evacuate from a building in good time.

Snapshot

Current topics of interest include:

Fieldwork and overseas travel

Health & Safety Services are updating our existing Safety Guide on fieldwork, and expanding it to include overseas travel. If your department does a lot of fieldwork or undertakes international travel, and you think you have good systems in place to assist travellers, please get in touch so that we can include best practice in the revised guide.

Government review of health and safety

You may have heard that the government has just concluded a review of health and safety legislation, led by Lord Young. The Report addresses aspects of the current regime that the government perceives to be disproportionately burdensome on small or low-risk businesses and public bodies, and the perceived rise of the ‘compensation culture’.

Lord Young makes the following recommendations:

- Regulation of lawyers and claims companies, to prevent frivolous claims, and make simple claims easier and less expensive to process;
- Reducing the regulatory burden on small or low-risk businesses, by simplifying the risk assessment process for small and low risk businesses;
- Creating a single set of H&S legislation for low risk sectors to improve accessibility and understanding;
- Local Authorities to provide written reasons for banning events on H&S grounds, to avoid excessive caution and fear of claims leading to events being banned.

All of this should lead to a more common sense approach to the application of H&S legislation. We do not see it making a significant difference to the way we operate at the university. As an example, Lord Young promotes HSE’s new simple risk assessment process for offices – the university template is already modelled on this.