



Safety Note 56

Access control to University Laboratories and Workshops

Introduction

This Safety Note provides guidance on controlling access to hazardous or sensitive areas within the University of Reading, using a colour-coded system to categorise laboratories and other areas.

Why control access?

There are a number of reasons why the University needs to control access to certain areas, including:

- Safety – to prevent exposure to hazardous substances and procedures;
- Research continuity - to prevent accidental damage to expensive or sensitive equipment or data;
- Security – to prevent theft of, or interference to, high risk materials, equipment or information.

Clear identification of restricted areas

All laboratories, workshops and research areas (not including offices) should be categorised into one of the following three categories:

- Highly restricted access
- Restricted access
- Limited access

Areas will be defined by Access Control signage on the outside of laboratory and workshop doors.

*All **highly restricted** and **restricted** areas must be agreed by, and registered with Health & Safety Services and Security Services, and details of the nature of the hazards and control measures recorded.*

All laboratories and workshops must clearly show a colour-coded Access Control sign, indicating the level of access control to the room. This gives guidance to other university staff, service providers and contractors about whether or not they can enter the area, and under which conditions (routine work, non-routine and emergencies). The colour coding system is described in the following table.

	Examples of areas	Routine Access	Non-routine access	Emergency access
	Areas such as Containment level 3 laboratories or laboratories containing highly sensitive or hazardous equipment or materials.	Access to named authorised personnel only	Permit to Work including area decontamination certificate required for all works, including maintenance, equipment servicing and cleaning.	E&F or Security cannot enter these areas. Contact must be made with identified responsible person.
	Areas such as Radiation rooms, laser laboratories.	Access to named authorised personnel only	Permit to Work required for all works, including maintenance, equipment servicing, visual surveys and cleaning.	Response by E&F or Security can be facilitated without the users but only by room specific pre-established protocol.
	Areas such as Containment Level 2 laboratories and other general laboratories e.g. chemistry and workshops.	Access to named authorised personnel and supervised or specifically authorised Undergraduate students. Access to authorised cleaners, IT and maintenance staff for pre-defined non-intrusive tasks.	Permit-to work required for all non-emergency works, non-routine cleaning and intrusive works.	Response by E&F or security can be facilitated without the users. Generic response protocols will apply.

This signage is in addition to the safety signage required to identify specific hazards and mandatory instructions, as described in Safety Note 57.

How is access control achieved?

In addition to signage, control of access to laboratories and workshops must be achieved by a variety of means dependent on the safety and security needs of an area. As the majority of buildings in the University are open access during normal working hours, all laboratories and workshops should be locked by a key, keypad, swipe or proximity access card when unoccupied.

Areas requiring higher security or restrictions may require more security controls such as additional swipe card or PIN code access, unique (non_master-suite) keys and keypad locks. Schools/Units should ensure that Security Services have copies of all keys and codes in case of emergencies.

Responsibilities

Head of School/Unit is responsible for ensuring a system is in place throughout the School/ Unit to identify areas where access control is required.

Building support officers are responsible for ensuring the list of access controlled areas; they must also pass any changes to the list to E&F, Security and IT.

Technical Services is responsible for ensuring that the list of Permit to Work issuers is up to date

Health & Safety Coordinators are responsible for liaising with project supervisors and/or school line management to designate all workshops and laboratories into one of the three categories and for ensuring that a Permit to Work system is implemented (see Safety Note 58).

Person in charge of laboratory/workshop is responsible for ensuring that those wishing to access an area are authorised either through issue of a Permit to Work or that they have been provided with suitable local, specific induction/information as organised by their supervisors or line managers.

In amber and red areas the person in charge of the laboratory must ensure, in liaison with the Building Support officer and Health & Safety Coordinator that suitable emergency plans are in place. They must also ensure arrangements to maintain good housekeeping e.g. for emptying bins, routine cleaning etc. are followed.

Laboratory/workshop users are responsible for adhering to the access control system and not entering areas unless authorised to do so. Users must follow any requirements set out in a permit to work issued for the area and must not allow access to engineers, maintenance or cleaners without a permit to work.

Other members of staff such as IT, maintenance, cleaning staff and contractors must not enter controlled access areas unless specifically authorised to do so. In limited access (yellow areas) this may be in the form of an induction by the line manager and under direct supervision. In (highly) restricted and restricted access areas (red/amber) entry will be strictly by a permit-to work.

Line managers of staff requesting a Permit to Work are to ensure that they have been trained in the requirements for accessing designated Controlled Access Areas and that such training has been entered on TRENT;

Definitions

Authorised personnel – these are the individuals authorised by the person responsible for the area to enter to undertake work. The area represents their normal place of work and they have received an induction. These may include staff and postgraduate students. Undergraduate students may enter these areas if they have undertaken the induction for that lab or are supervised by an authorised user.

Cleaners and other support staff such as IT and maintenance workers may only be considered as authorised personnel (in YELLOW, Limited access areas) when they have received appropriate induction and information and are working to an agreed written protocol. Authorisation must be recorded on TRENT in all cases.

Intrusive work – Access to Limited Access (yellow) areas may be granted under direct supervision for non-intrusive works for example, visual checks of lighting, fire extinguishers, meter readings etc. Such visits that impact on the operations of the area, e.g. erecting ladders (to access roof voids), drilling, removing equipment, isolating equipment, and works that affect services, will require a Permit to Work.

Emergency access

In emergency situations (E&F - PRIORITY 1 issues) non-authorised staff (security/ maintenance) may need to access controlled areas, for example in the event of a fire signal, a flooding or a medical emergency.

In **(Yellow) Limited access areas: Trained** security, maintenance or emergency services staff can enter the areas to make the area safe (e.g. stop the leak, turn of isolators) and then leave the area immediately. The person responsible for the area must be contacted as soon as possible and advice must be sought before accessing areas if laboratory alarms, such as those associated with Gas Safe systems, are sounding.

In **(Amber) Restricted access areas:** in the event of an emergency, Security, maintenance or emergency services will follow a pre-established (room specific) protocol that details the hazards present. In most cases the person responsible for the lab identified in the emergency procedures will be contacted prior to access.

In **(Red) Highly Restricted access areas:** Security or maintenance will not enter even in the event of an emergency. The emergency services will not enter these areas unless in life-threatening circumstances. Contact must be made with the responsible person.

In all cases, following emergency access, Health and Safety Co-ordinators and Building Support Officers will be notified the following working day of the emergency and the outcome.

Health and Safety Services
Jan 2017