Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of The Safety Wire. Feedback we received following the first edition was entirely positive; indeed some staff members with health & safety roles at the University have requested more regular, separate communications and we are only too happy to oblige!

In the last issue we requested ideas for a new name for the Unit. Unfortunately, nobody came up with anything suitable (including EHSS staff), so we will continue to be called Environmental, Health & Safety Services.

The annual Health & Safety Report for 2011 was presented to the Audit & Risk Committee on 17 May 2012. This is now available on the web site (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/2011%20Annual%20Report.pdf). Overall I believe it shows we are making steady progress in all aspects, and I take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts and the support you give all the staff at EHSS: we do appreciate it.

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Gas Safety

Introduction
Gas is a versatile supply of energy, from heating University Buildings to home use for BBQs over the summer period. Gas is supplied as either mains methane natural gas or as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders. Gas is, however, not harmless – explosions have been well documented over the years. Also, every year about 15 people in the UK die of Carbon Monoxide poisoning, and many more are non-fatally severely poisoned (http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/ridgas.xls). Care should always be taken when handling gas equipment.

How is carbon monoxide produced by gas equipment?
Carbon monoxide is produced by incomplete combustion of gas. This will show up in equipment as:

- Yellow or orange rather than blue flames (except fuel effect fires or flue-less appliances which are designed to display this colour of flame)
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu or simply tiredness. Symptoms to look out for include: headaches or dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, loss of consciousness, tiredness, pains in the chest or stomach, erratic behaviour and possibly visual problems.

If you see any of the warning signs listed or suffer from any of these symptoms you should switch off the appliance, ventilate the area and call a ‘Gas Safe Registered’ engineer as soon as practicable (by law, all engineers must be registered to work on a gas appliance). If you smell gas at home it is vital that you ventilate the area, evacuate the area and then telephone Transco (National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999) or a local Gas Safe Registered engineer. If there is a leak at work you should also call Estates as a matter of urgency.

Maintenance of Gas Equipment
It is recommended that you get your domestic gas equipment serviced on an annual basis by a Gas Safe registered engineer. This will ensure the safety of the equipment and make it more efficient (and save you money).

Portable Gas Appliances
Many people will be using portable gas appliances using LPG cylinders (eg in caravans, BBQs etc). It is very important that these are well maintained and used in a well-ventilated area. You should always check that the valve connecting the equipment is not leaking (listen for hissing noise). If the regulator is physically damaged it should always be replaced before it starts to leak. You should always check the pipework connecting the cylinder to the appliance to ensure it has not perished or been damaged, again this should be replaced on a regular basis.

LPG is a heavier than air gas and “flows” like water, filling the space from ground level upwards, so you might not notice a leak before a spark ignites the gas. Always be careful when handling this sort of equipment, positioning it away from drains etc.

Conclusion
Gas equipment which is used carefully and well maintained will provide basic needs (heating) as well as many enjoyable events eg BBQs etc. Please be aware of the potential problems and be vigilant for possible problems with your equipment.

Wishing you a nice hot and sunny summer so that you can use your BBQs!
Focus on... Training

EHSS now carries out a wide range of health and safety training for all of the University’s 2,500 staff. This includes the compulsory stuff, such as fire safety, manual handling and control of hazardous substances – and the fun stuff, especially fire extinguisher training. Over the last three years, more than a thousand fires have been put out by staff practising with extinguishers and fire blankets, and many hair-raising rides have been taken down the stairs in evacuation chairs (becoming smooth and comfortable rides with practice, of course!). This all seems to be bearing fruit. Serious accidents are rare, small fires have been dealt with efficiently at home as well as at work, and fire drills are becoming much smoother.

We also arrange first aid training for our army of volunteers, who practise techniques for dealing with life-threatening situations as well as day-to-day minor injuries and illnesses. This training is being put to good use - not only in the University offices and laboratories, graduations and concerts, but also in the wider community. Graduates of the first aid courses have been inspired to volunteer with the local ambulance service and to train scouts and scout leaders in the principles of first aid. In one case, a member of staff emerged from her first aid course as a newly-qualified first aider, and immediately dealt with a serious fracture sustained by an elderly lady who fell in the street.

While we have made good progress with training, we still have some way to go in order to meet the very best recognised standards, and Paul and Christine are undertaking an analysis of training needs in consultation with each School and Unit, to establish a timetable for regular training tailored to meet the needs of each staff member.

If you wish to arrange training of any kind, we would be very happy to help you. Training will soon be bookable via CAPOD’s online system, but until then please contact Christine at chml@st-andrews.ac.uk, or Emma Harbour at ehss@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Industry News

Changes to The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
As of 6 April 2012, RIDDOR’s over-three-day injury reporting requirement has changed. The trigger point has increased from over three days’ to over seven days’ incapacitation (incapacitation means that the worker is absent or is unable to do work that they would reasonably be expected to do as part of their normal work).

CD241 - Proposals to review HSE’s Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs)
This consultation sets out HSE’s proposals to review its Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs). It seeks views on proposals for the revision, consolidation or withdrawal of 15 ACOPs which are to be delivered by end-2013 and on proposals for minor revisions, or no changes, to a further 15 ACOPs which are to be delivered by 2014. These include a proposal to withdraw the ACOP for the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and replace it with a suite of more specific, updated guidance by 2013. It also seeks views on a proposal to limit all ACOP documents to a maximum length of 32 pages, other than in exceptional circumstances.

"She's gone too far this time!"
Are you a computer user? If so, read on......

Upper limb, back, neck and shoulder problems can and do result where workstations are not set up appropriately, where jobs are not well designed or where people do not use their work stations properly. The Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations 1992 (which set out employers’ requirements to reduce the risk of working with DSE by ensuring that workplaces and jobs are well designed) provide guidance on how workstations should be set up and how employees should interact with their workstation. They also cover laptops and hand held devices. A leaflet produced by the Health and Safety Executive Working with VDU’s, provides advice with respect to this for employees (http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf).

All staff who use a computer for at least an hour a day are required to complete the Online DSE Computerised training pack on the University website. (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/Healthandsafety/Publications/). This training pack provides information to enable you to set up your workstation correctly, and to identify any issues to be addressed. Staff should notify their manager of any issues so that remedial action can be taken. Where employees raise health concerns that they believe are associated with their workstation, their manager may make a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.

The following tips can help to reduce the likelihood of any health issues:

- Make sure your workstation complies with the regulations and speak to your manager if you have any concerns with this.
- Adopt the correct seating posture.
- Take at least a 5-10 minute break every hour away from the workstation by doing a different work task. This helps to prevent muscle fatigue and encourages the circulation.
- Think about how you plan your work. Aim for a variety of tasks to avoid repetitive tasks.
- Take your rest breaks away from your workstation.
- Look away from the screen and blink regularly. This helps to avoid eye strain and discomfort.
- Keep well hydrated. Computers and other electrical equipment can dry out the atmosphere. This also encourages you to get up away from your workstation.
- Think about how you use a computer or hand held device at home. The same principles apply.
- Carry out regular stretches to help avoid muscle fatigue. Examples of stretches are shown in the online training package.
- Exercise regularly. Computer work is sedentary so you need to make up for this to avoid weak muscles of the back, which can often lead to back, neck and shoulder pain.

EHSS NEWS

It has been a busy few months in EHSS, all the fire extinguishers within the University have had or are due to have their annual servicing from Fife Fire. This is a mammoth task which takes a few months to carry out.

Emma Harbour, Unit Secretary is due to go on maternity leave in August 2012 and her post will be covered by Linda Steyn for a period of around ten months. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Linda and to wish Emma good luck with her new arrival.