



# HEALTH & SAFETY *matters*

## Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...

Many of us sit for long periods of time in front of the computer – this can result in tired eyes, aching joints, back pain and fatigue. These problems are not inevitable and they can generally be helped or avoided by making straightforward changes to the layout of your desk and computer and by sensible work planning.

### Information, training and workstation assessment

To help you learn how to work comfortably at your computer, the University provides an information website, hosted at [www.openenerg.com/dse](http://www.openenerg.com/dse). Computer users are required to visit this site, and ensure that they arrange their workstations according to the guidance given there. The site includes a self assessment tool to identify potential problems and find ways to solve them. If you require additional assistance, each department/section has a DSE assessor who can help you with this.

As a starting point, here are three things to do today –

- a) Tidy up! Poor housekeeping often means that users adopt unnecessarily uncomfortable postures e.g. stretching across books and papers to reach the keyboard, leaning out to the side to work with a 'runaway mouse'



- b) Don't sit still. It doesn't matter how good your posture is, sitting in the same position for long periods is a bad idea. Take 'mini breaks' of 20 or 30 seconds several times an hour, and use these to move around, stretch etc.
- c) If you use a laptop for long periods, get a separate mouse and keyboard so that you can position the laptop/screen higher up and further back.

For further information, have a look at the University policy on DSE use, which details how the University satisfies its legal obligations in relation to computer work, and the responsibilities on you as an employee under the same laws. And finally, don't forget that the University, under that same legal responsibility will pay for you to see an optician if you work regularly with a computer. However, the test must be carried out at the on-campus optician, and you must contact the H&S office for a voucher in advance of your appointment.

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## Shedding light on new optical radiation law

New regulations, namely the Control of Artificial Optical Radiation at Work Regulations, came into force on 27 April 2010. They require duty holders to protect the eyes and skin of workers from exposure to hazardous sources of artificial optical radiation (AOR). AOR includes light emitted from all artificial sources in all its forms such as ultraviolet, infrared and laser beams but excludes sunlight. Examples of hazardous sources of AOR can be found in the following activities: welding; plasma cutting; UV fluorescence and sterilisation systems; UV curing of paints and inks; medical and cosmetic treatments (e.g. laser surgery). Duty holders need to reduce risks to as low as reasonably practicable.

Evidence suggests that the majority of duty holders with such sources are aware of the hazards and already take appropriate action to reduce the risks. These duty holders will not be expected to take further action and it is only those that are not already controlling risks that need to do more, which will include a risk assessment as well as introducing control measures. The regulations are designed to help create healthier, safer workplaces.

For further information, you can go to:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/nonionising/optical.htm>.

The University Non-Ionising Radiation Policy (excluding Lasers) is available at either; [www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/specific-policies.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/specific-policies.html), or, [www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/radiation/radiationpolicies.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/radiation/radiationpolicies.html).

The University Laser code of practice is available at;  
[www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/guidance-notes.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/guidance-notes.html).

## Bad Vibrations!

The health risks of prolonged work with vibrating tools have been known for many years – employees working in industries such as mining, quarrying, forestry and road construction are especially at risk of developing symptoms such as vibration ‘white finger’ and nerve problems which make it difficult to fasten buttons, pick up small coins etc.

Some staff at Loughborough University work with vibrating tools such as drills, lawnmowers and wood working machinery, albeit mostly at a fairly low level. The University therefore needs to comply with the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 to assess the level of risk from vibration. Even where the risk of health problems from vibration is believed to be very low, we need to gather enough information to be able to prove this. Risk assessment for vibration involves looking at the time equipment is used for, and the amount it actually vibrates. Measuring vibration levels is a complex and specialist activity, compared, for example to the measurement of noise using a sound level meter. Generally we have to rely on externally produced data e.g. from the manufacturers and suppliers of the tools we use, or from specialist organisations.

Having assessed the risk, we then need to reduce it as far as is reasonably practicable.

For example, we may need to reduce the amount of time people spend with particular tools; replace old equipment with new tools which have lower levels of vibration (but still do the job well); and carry out regular health checks for any staff considered to be at higher risk.

Training on risk assessment for vibration is available for DSOs and supervisors through the Professional Development website. Briefings for staff who are exposed to vibration in their work can be arranged on request. If you have any questions about work with vibration or need help with risk assessment please contact Hugh Weaver or the Occupational Health Advisor, or refer to the Policy on the Control of Hand Arm Vibration at work on the H&S web pages.

## Feedback from the University Health, Safety & Environment Committee – 9 June 2010

The University Health, Safety and Environment Committee met on 9 June 2010. Items presented for consideration and approval included amended policies and guidance on Pathogens (excluding blood borne viruses), Student Placements and Manual Handling. A new Code of Practice on Laser safety was approved. The Health Safety and Environment Manager reported on a recent University wide risk assessment audit, progress on the strategic risk register and a recent Health and Safety Executive inspection of the new centre for Biological Engineering.

The University Occupational Health Advisor presented a report on Occupational Health for the period 2005 to 2009.

A presentation was given to the Committee by Andrew Burgess, Director of Facilities Management and Jo Hasbury, Sustainability Manager, on the University's Environmental Protection Policy and progress made in the Eco Campus awards scheme.

The meeting received a report on accident statistics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2010 and the University's Fire Officer's report.

A report from the Ethical Advisory Committee was available as a starred item.

Papers and minutes can be seen at; [www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/hsec/meetings/index.htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/hsec/meetings/index.htm). Click on “Agenda” and link to the relevant paper or click on “Minutes” for the meeting you require.

Don't forget that Departmental Safety Officers (DSO's) can raise items for discussion at HS & EC. If you've got something you want discussed, please let us know about it, so that we can have the item in good time for the meeting. We need items at least two weeks before the date of the next meeting which is, 17 February 2010. If you have an item you wish to speak on or present a paper on, it should be sent to Hugh Weaver, Deputy Health, Safety and Environment Manager. The Chair of the Committee will then be asked if the DSO can attend.

# barbecue safety guidance



New guidance has been published by the Health, Safety & Environment office on the use of barbecues at the University. The documents are called "Health & Safety Guidance Note (No.2) – Use of barbecues (excluding foil type/disposable barbecues)" and "Health & Safety Guidance Note for foil type/disposable BBQ's". Guidance Note No.2 can be applied to large gatherings and the other, to smaller events and impromptu barbecues.

Both documents are aimed at ensuring that people can relax and enjoy social events in safety. They can be used for barbecues run by staff and students alike.

In summary, the main requirements of the guidance for smaller events requires that students obtain permission from their Hall Warden team to have a barbecue, where it's going to be held etc. For larger events, the guidance requires organisers to notify all relevant Departments, Support Services and Hall Warden teams etc, that the barbecue is to be held. There is a barbecue approval form for this purpose.

The HS & E office can loan out fire fighting equipment to organisers of barbecues. Just fill out the loan request form, and you can ensure your event runs smoothly and safely.

The new barbecue health and fire safety guidance and forms have been posted on the HS & E website at the following web addresses:

Application form for loan of fire fighting equipment (barbecues) -  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/forms/forms.html>

Notification form for events (including BBQ's) -  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/forms/forms.html>

Health and Safety Guidance Note (No2 - use of barbecues (excluding foil type/disposable barbecues) -  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/guidance-notes.html>

Health and Safety Guidance note for foil type/disposable BBQ's -  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse/policies/guidance-notes.html>



## DSO profile –David Wenham

David is DSO for the Business School which has the largest number of students of any department of the University. He joined the University in 1990, having previously worked as an inspector at or for the Health and Safety Executive in industry groups covering such diverse activities as Chemicals, Food, Construction, Woodworking and Shipping.

David's main role is Director of the Postgraduate Programme in Occupational Health and Safety Management which attracts professional safety advisers mainly from large multinational organisations such as BP, Rolls Royce and Astra Zeneca from within the UK and the rest of the world. The furthest any student has travelled for the face to face modules is the Falkland Islands! There are in excess of 150 students on the programme at any one time studying for a diploma or an MSc. David's main areas of interest are Health and Safety Law and Risk Assessment techniques. He teaches the latter to HSE inspectors as part of their diploma programme at Warwick University. His work has involved travel to such places as Paris, Malta, Beijing, Singapore, Tokyo and Bahrain where he has attended conferences, delivered papers and lead short courses. Over the years, several members of University staff have successfully undertaken the programme as part of their training as DSO.

Although the Business School activities are of relatively low risk, staff and students do have occasional accidents with the most common being slips, trips and falls. Manual handling has also posed problems. One of the most significant risks involves changing 18.5litre spring water. Following a discussion with the supplier the bottles now used are of 13 litre capacity which significantly reduces the risk

## DSO Forum

The third DSO Forum was held on 6 January 2010. Once again, DSO's from across the University gathered to "network", to talk to fellow DSO's and to share and discuss ideas, problems etc.

The speaker at this event was Dr Stacey Clemes, Lecturer in Human Biology at Loughborough University. The presentation was entitled; "The relationship between physical activity and health" and looked at;

- The impact of physical inactivity and prolonged sitting on health,
- Why promote physical activity in the workplace,

- Methods of increasing physical activity in the workplace,
- Innovative approaches to promoting physical activity in the workplace, and,
- The results of a survey of activity levels measured in Loughborough University staff.

The next DSO Forum is on 14 July 2010 and the speaker is Martin Cook from 3M Occupational Health and Environmental Safety. His presentation will be on the correct selection, use and maintenance of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) and in particular the importance of Face Fit testing as part of controls required by Coshh.

## Training News

The HS & E office's training course programme is now up and running. Remember, these are either optional or mandatory, (arranged by the HS & E office or by the department or support service in question). The courses available are on the HS & E web site; (go to [www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse) and click on "Training").

These health and safety training courses and workshops are advertised on the Staff Development web site. ([www.lboro.ac.uk/service/sd/hs/index.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/sd/hs/index.html)), and you can find the courses listed under "Upcoming Health and Safety training activities". You can register your interest in each course, by clicking on the "more information" link next to each title.

These courses are in addition to existing fire safety training courses, and courses to be run on future dates in conjunction with Facilities Management, on specific work activities such as working at height.

Courses and workshops on generic risk assessments, Hand Arm Vibration, Manual handling (safe lifting techniques and risk assessment) and Compressed gas safety have all been received well.

We would urge all those involved in health and safety to take up these training opportunities and to register for the courses as soon as possible. Once sufficient numbers of people are registered, the courses can be arranged. So its first come, first served!

## HS & E office website update

The HS&E office website has continued to develop since the publication of the last newsletter in December 2009.

New or amended policies and guidance posted since the last edition of Health & Safety matters include; Compressed gas safety, Student placements, Smoking at work, the University Health and Safety Policy statement, Blood Borne Viruses, Lone Working, Manual Handling, Small Works and a Code of Practice on Laser safety

New guidance notes issued include; Drinking water bottles: generic manual handling risk assessment and instructions on changing drinking water bottles, generic risk assessment and Radiation risk assessment. The HS and E office website [www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/hse) is the place to go to see all these documents and more.

Please remember that old policies awaiting review are not currently accessible via the web site but they are still current, and if you would like any information concerning any of them, please contact the HS & E office.

Please send your comments about the newsletter or ideas for items you would like including to Hugh Weaver on 2183 or email [h.c.weaver@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:h.c.weaver@lboro.ac.uk)



## HE sector - health and safety case law

### Fatality in a University pool

A lifeguard has been convicted of failing to take reasonable care of a man who drowned at a University swimming pool. The lifeguard was found to have failed to take reasonable care for the health and safety of pool users by a Wolverhampton Crown Court jury on 27 October 2009. The lifeguard was working at Wolverhampton's Walsall campus and did not see the man drowning at the bottom of the pool. The lifeguard denied failing to supervise the pool with reasonable care, but the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) prosecution was successful. He was fined £200. The HSE's prosecuting officer said: "It is completely unacceptable for those with a responsibility for the safety of others to neglect their duty". The court also heard that whilst the lifeguard did not cause the casualty to get into difficulty, his neglect of duty was clearly a major factor in leaving him and potentially others using the pool, unnecessarily exposed to risk.

### Electric car crash

This case was brought by the HSE in January 2006, against Salford University. It followed an investigation into an accident to an employee of the University, who was seriously injured when the electric utility vehicle he was driving collided with the open end of a gate style horizontal barrier. The court found that they had breached section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 in that effective preventative and control measures had not been taken by the employer prior to the accident and they were fined £60,000 plus costs of around £11,700.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE HS & E OFFICE

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## And finally...

**Q: How can you tell an extroverted safety Manager?**

**A: When he talks to you, he looks at your safety shoes instead of his own**