

OHSIM Newsletter

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DON'T GET BURNT



A small fire in a University building was recently caused by the melt-down of a faulty pedestal fan. The fan had been tested and clearly tagged "DANGER, DO NOT OPERATE" but this warning was obviously ignored. Use of the faulty fan caused the fire and the subsequent emergency response and property damage that required restoration.

All University staff, students and visitors are expected to heed warning signs and cooperate with University programs designed to ensure health, safety and welfare. Wilful acts that place others at risk of injury may attract serious penalties for the individual concerned under NSW OHS legislation.

For further information about the University's electrical tagging and testing program and for electrical repairs contact the CIS Service Desk: <http://www.facilities.usyd.edu.au/afm/reports/index.cfm>

EMERGENCY HELP

The University's Emergency Help website has recently been given a facelift. This website is the primary source of emergency information for all University Staff and Students. All staff and students should refer to this website for general guidance about how to prepare for and respond to common emergency situations. The Emergency Help page is accessible as a quick link from the University's home page or via the OHSIM website. http://www.usyd.edu.au/ohs/ohs_manual/emergency/help.shtml

NOT ANOTHER AUDIT

The 2008 OHS risk management systems audit will be conducted University wide from July to September 2008. This generic audit will examine how OHS risks are

managed at departmental or unit level in comparison with the expectations of the University's ohsrm Program:

http://www.usyd.edu.au/ohs/ohs_manual/ohsrm.shtml

The University of Sydney audit protocol is based on the principles of *AS/NZS 4801:2001 Occupational health and safety management systems – Specification with guidance for use*. There are eight (8) audit elements:

1. Management Leadership and Commitment;
2. Safety Planning;
3. Consultation & Involvement;
4. Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment & Control;
5. Training & Instruction;
6. Emergency Preparedness;
7. Incident Reporting & Investigation; and
8. Purchasing.

University departments with fewer than 10 staff will be offered the services of an OHS consultant to conduct their OHS audit. Larger departments are expected to be self sufficient, as per the successful 2006 audit. OHSIM will conduct In-house OHS Auditor training in June-August 2008 to cater for this exercise. The audit results will be finalised in October 2008.

FUME CUPBOARDS

Fume cupboards are often critical to ensuring the safety of laboratory staff when working with hazardous substances, but if fume cupboards are not used properly they may be giving you a false sense of protection. Following are some brief guidelines to help ensure that the fume cupboards in your department are providing the best possible protection for laboratory staff.

Before use

- Ensure that you are using an appropriate fume cupboard. Work with perchloric acid, perchlorates or hydrofluoric acid should be performed in specially designed fume cupboards with special safety features. Fume cupboards are not appropriate for work with microorganisms or Genetically Modified Organisms. These should be handled inside an appropriate Biosafety Cabinet (Class I or II).
- Check that the fume cupboard has passed the most recent annual performance test. Refer to the sticker on the face of the cupboard.
- Check that the work surface is free from contamination and that there is adequate space to set up the equipment/

process. Remove any equipment and substances that are not in use.

- Set up the equipment towards the centre and back of the work space.

- Check that there is adequate air flow. Air flow should be obvious when the sash is pulled down to the lowest position.

During use

- Lower the sash as far as practical during operation and lower the sash further to the lowest position when hands-on operation is not required.

- Avoid air turbulence, ie drafts from adjacent windows or doors, or sudden movements in front of the cupboard.

- Clean-up any accidental spills immediately or as soon as it is safe to do so.

After use

- Remove all equipment and materials and dispose of wastes. Fume cupboards should not be used for the storage of chemicals or equipment.

- Clean and decontaminate the fume cupboard.

Maintenance

It is the operator's responsibility to keep the fume cupboard clean and free from contamination. However, CIS is responsible for maintenance and annual performance testing. If your fume cupboard is not performing correctly or the annual performance test was carried out more than 12 months ago, contact CIS immediately on 1-7838 or via the E-Service Desk.

Prior to maintenance or testing work, the fume cupboard operators must ensure that:

- hazardous materials and chemicals are removed from the fume cupboard and that it has been cleaned and decontaminated;

- contractors who are required to access a laboratory to perform maintenance or service work are made aware of the hazardous nature of materials and equipment contained within that area, and the necessary emergency and decontamination procedures;

- during maintenance the contractors will tag the fume cupboard out '**System under maintenance – Do Not Use**', and the laboratory manager must ensure that the fume cupboard is not used during this period.

HANDLE WITH CARE

Manual handling is one of the most common causes of injury at the University, as it is for all industries. Manual handling is any activity that requires a person to apply physical force and typically includes lifting, holding, restraining, carrying, pushing and pulling. All workplaces have activities that involve some manual handling, therefore everyone is at some risk of injury. Look for manual handling activities in your workplace and avoid related injuries. Examples include:

- Packing or unpacking storage cupboards or boxes;
- Placing or retrieving items on/in/from shelves or vehicles for transport;
- Replacing the water container on the drinking fountain;
- Carrying bags or boxes of paper;
- Shifting building materials etc.

The **risk of injury** from manual handling is increased by:

- Movements that involve reaching above shoulder height or below mid-thigh height, or twisting of the body;
- Restrictions or obstacles that impede ready access to items or sufficient space to perform a task;
- Performing the task frequently or for long periods of time without a break;
- Having long distances between points where a load is moved;
- Heavy weights and forces;
- Loads that are large, awkward in shape, slippery or unstable;
- Performing heavy tasks in close succession, or early in the shift when the body is not warmed up;
- Lack of experience or training;
- Clothing that restricts physical movement;
- Individual characteristics such as pre-existing physical condition, pregnancy etc.

Avoid manual handling injuries by implementing sensible risk controls:

- Eliminate the manual handling task eg. by having deliveries made directly to the point of use;
- Substitute the use of manual labour with a mechanical device eg. trolley, forklift, hoist;
- Reduce the weight or size of the load by ordering lighter and smaller or divided products, or seeking assistance to make a coordinated team lift;
- Organise the work differently eg. reduce the distance involved in moving loads, store heavy or frequently used items near waist height, clear access routes, warm up for and space apart activities that require physical exertion or repetitive action. For more information on safe manual handling visit: http://www.usyd.edu.au/ohs/ohs_manual/manual_handling/mhdlg.shtml

Address Label

This and other OHSIM Newsletters are also available on our website at www.usyd.edu.au/ohs/news.