

CHEMISTRY BUILDING HEALTH and SAFETY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2005 at 2.30 p.m. in 7.28

In attendance: Professor P O'Brien, Dr. E.M. Armstrong, Mr A.Griffiths, Mr T.Graham, Dr B Sakakini, Mr. A.Sutherland and Ms. C.Davidge

1. Apologies

Mr J Belcher, Professor F R Livens, Mr J Friend, Mr J Knights

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2004 at 2.15 p.m. in the Schunck Library were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

The neon bulb indicating the status of the automatic CO₂ system in the solvents store has been replaced.

The Estates people are still looking at the lighting levels and the installation of oxygen depletion meters in the Basement.

4. Correspondence

The Safety Office has issued details about changes to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002. These are listed in the COSHH Amendment Regulations 2004. In summary, the current Occupational Exposure Standards (OES) and Maximum Exposure Limits (MEL) are to be abolished with effect from 8 April, to be replaced by Working Exposure Limits (WEL). These have not yet been published but are not expected to be very different in value to the OES and MELs in the current volume of EH 40. It is also now essential that the hierarchy of control which has hitherto been suggested as good practice is adhered to (i.e. avoid/eliminate the hazard, control at source if possible through collective safety measures (containment and LEV) through to Personal Protective Measures.

Action: EMA to alter the School COSHH form in the light of the new Regulations and get the new forms printed.

The University Safety Advisor has issued a reminder that when equipment is moved via lifts and hoists please check and work within the safe working load of the lifting equipment. This reminder follows an accident of a lift crashing to the Basement when old computer equipment was being moved (fortunately no injuries).

Action EMA to circulate appropriate reminder.

The University has a standard form which has to be signed by the Head of School confirming that the named student owes no money etc. to the University before s/he is allowed to graduate. Catherine Davidge has confirmed by email that the University is sympathetic to the School of Chemistry's request for an additional clause to this form pertaining to either the disposal costs or transfer of ownership of any chemical legacy.

5. Chairman's Business

There was concern at the lack of representation at this Health and Safety Committee of the Academic Staff. In the absence of the regular secretary of the Committee, the Chairman asked that the current circulation list be reviewed to ensure that there was appropriate representation from the Sections. Once this had been done, he requested that if regular members of the Committee were unable to attend meetings they should send an alternate.

Action – EMA to review the circulation list with DJS and advise the Chairman of any gaps in representation.

6. Chemical Weapons Convention Reporting Requirements

EMA reported that she had sent a return to the Health and Safety Services in respect of the purchase and use of Scheduled chemicals for 2004. She said that she would circulate a School Policy on the collation of data for these returns as there was a certain form that Suppliers needed us to complete prior to purchase that flagged up chemicals that were listed on the Schedules. To this policy would be appended a list of the current Scheduled Chemicals.

Action EMA to circulate Policy and Schedule.

7. Report from the Faraday H&S Committee (FBHSC).

Dr Sakakini reported from the FBHSC.

The main concerns at the last meeting were centred around the report of the Solvent Store produced by Elaine Armstrong and Terry Graham and the clearing and decommissioning of the Faraday Building. Dr Sakakini also reported on the accident where an undergraduate student inhaled some ammonia, though this had not yet been discussed at the FBHSC.

a. Solvent Store – basis of report, *actions in italics*

The fire suppression system in the solvent stores was very old and needed testing and bringing up to standard. *EMA said she had initiated this with the Estates Directorate and Terry Graham said he would follow this through.*

Decanting or transfilling of solvents from unearthed drums. *Prof O'Brien ruled that this should stop forthwith.*

The arrangements for storage of waste solvents awaiting collection should be rethought and the dedicated solvent store in the Undergraduate block should be emptied to allow solvents to be stored in this area. *Action still awaited.*

There was a strong chemical smell in the acid store which indicated that the small bottles of chemicals for reissue should be disposed of rather than being retained. *There was no progress on this issue reported to the meeting.*

There was unanimous support for actions already set in motion and encouragement to proceed with sorting out the problem areas.

b. Clearing and Decommissioning of the Faraday Building

A letter had been sent to the Management Committee requesting that funding for disposal of chemicals and equipment from laboratories should be provided or underwritten by the School, as staff movements were being driven by Project Unity. There was real concern from the Committee that individual members of staff may not have funding available to cover the disposal costs of all that would need to be disposed of. Professor O'Brien said that the Management Committee had discussed this matter but it was felt that individual Research Groups should be responsible for clearing their own areas and the School should not be incurring the cost for years of poor housekeeping.

A working group consisting of Elaine Armstrong, John Belcher and Bahij Sakakini had been set up to investigate in more detail the problems of clearing the Faraday Buildings.

c. Withdrawal of Breathing Apparatus

After advice from the HSE Inspector to Professor O'Brien, all breathing apparatus in the Faraday Buildings had been withdrawn.

d. Accident

A student had inhaled some ammonia vapour whilst removing an aliquot to complete an experiment and had had to be referred to hospital as a result. Investigation by Sr Sakakini, Dr Armstrong and Mr Hewson had identified deficiencies in the COSHH form completed by the student prior to the experiment and felt that the lab scripts could be improved in respect of health and safety information and dilutions of reagents that should be used. A root cause was also felt to be inadequate (site and task specific) Demonstrator Training, which would be addressed before the start of the next academic year.

e. Radioactive sources

Two sealed radioactive sources had been moved to Liverpool University under the supervision of Dr Patel, the Radiological Protection Officer for the ex-UMIST campus.

An application for government funding to dispose of a further three sealed radioactive sources had been made and a decision was awaited to see if this application had been successful.

8. Risk Assessment Form

EMA reported that she had developed a new general risk assessment form and was waiting for it to be typed up. She would circulate the form for comments with the minutes and would welcome any feedback as it is important that the School (particularly those members based in the Chemistry Building) start completing risk assessments for activities other than those for which a COSHH form is required. The Chairman remarked that in common with most Chemistry Schools we are well versed in COSHH assessments, but this is only one type of risk assessment and there are others which we need to do.

Action: EMA to circulate proposed Risk Assessment Form

9. Disabled Toilet

There had been a problem with suspected abuse of the disabled toilet facilities on the Concourse. Therefore the toilet had been locked temporarily (a key was available from the Reception Desk) and also a request had been put in to Estates to change the lock to a RADAR lock. (RADAR locks are a universal lock used in facilities for disabled customers).

10. Accident Reports

There was an accident in the Chemistry Building where a postgraduate student had sustained severe cuts to his finger due to the slipping and subsequent breakage of a glass round bottomed flask whilst draining waste water out of an autoclave. His injuries necessitated microsurgery but are fortunately healing well. This risks posed by the activity have been re-assessed in the light of the accident and procedures have been modified.

11. Inspection Reports

An inspection of the 5th/4th Floors by Dr. D.J.Smith, Dr E M Armstrong and Ms. C.Davidge took place on 16/02/05. The Inspection Panel noted no items that would not be classed as general housekeeping

12. Arrangements for Inspections

3rd /2nd Floor -DJS, EMA, CD, AS. Date to be arranged.

Action: DJS to arrange.

Professor O'Brien asked that an inspection of radiochemistry should be arranged within the next four weeks.

Action: EMA to organise this inspection.

Dates of next meeting(s)

Monday 4 April at 2.15 pm (postponed to Monday, 18 April at 4.00 pm

Monday 13th June 2005 at 2.15 p.m. in 4.20

Monday 1st August 2005 at 2.15 p.m. in 4.20

A.O.B.

The skip belonging to Estates in the Goods Yard is in a poor position blocking the steps onto the loading bay and the dry riser.

EMA to contact Estates

Dewars stored in basement are blocking access to store

DJS to move to sixth floor

Multiplex has been appointed by the University for 3 years to maintain fire extinguishers and the Firetrace system installed in new fume cupboards. They will investigate the depressurisation of the firetrace systems that have occurred on the 1st floor.

Professor O'Brien asked that a safety awareness course be delivered for the benefit of academic staff.

EMA and CD to organise

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.30 p.m.