

SCHOOL of CHEMISTRY HEALTH and SAFETY COMMITTEE

Monday 5th September 2011 at 14:30 in Room 4.20

In Attendance

Prof. J. C. Whitehead (Chair), Dr. E.M. Armstrong, Mr. G. Smith (Minutes), Mr S Holden, Dr. P. Quayle, Mr J. Hughes, Dr. M. Attfield, Dr. C. Davidge, Mrs. C. Taylor, Dr. J. Morrisson, Dr. N. Bryan, Dr. D. Berrisford, Dr. N. Bryan

1. Apologies

Prof. M. Anderson, Dr. N. Bryan, Mr. J. Smith, Mr. P. Unsworth Dr. R. Blagg, Dr. T. Aspinall

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2011

The minutes were accepted with the correction that Dr. Nick Bryan attended the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

EMA enquired when the post-graduate demonstrator training week was to be held and whether she was to be involved as she would like to go through good laboratory practice.. PQ replied the week commencing 19 September and that the purpose of the training was to familiarise the demonstrators with the laboratory and specific experiments.

EMA informed the committee that she had the sample holders that had been discussed in previous meetings which members of the committee examined and decided to refer to the measurement teaching lab staff as the synthesis lab only used screw cap vials.

The Dean had emailed Schools to advise that chalk boards will no longer be fitted in refurbishment of teaching rooms. CD informed the committee that Physics were evaluating a liquid whose usefulness appeared to be dependant on the types of boards used.

EMA noted that the refurbishment of the good lifts was slightly behind schedule though it was due for handover week commencing 12 September. The new lift is fitted with an autoclave key.

Refurbishment of Lab 5.07 has been completed, though the area had not been freed for occupation due to House Services staff carrying out a lot of work on the floor. JCW and EMA noted the need for the area to be reoccupied by the School.

The windows refurbishment has had a slight delay due to lack of structural information needed for the erection of access equipment, though the three windows that have been postponed on floor 7 will be reprogrammed for a later date.

EMA mentioned that new guidance from the University required one fire marshal per protected stairwell. On this basis the Chemistry building required approximately 40 fire marshals, a significant increase. JCW asked that fire marshals remain on the agenda.

CD informed the committee that there was a new document on the Manchester University staff-net site titled "no alarms without smoke" which encourages individuals to leave the building promptly when hearing an evacuation alarm without waiting to be told as alarms can be used to evacuate buildings for reasons other than fire. CD advised that a Fire Awareness Officer was to be appointed by the University whose remit

would include training on all aspects of fire awareness and organisation of evacuation drills etc. though as the appointment had not yet been made, external providers would be required for the training this academic year.

DB noted that he was unsure how many fire marshals there were in MIB, though he would check.

JCW asked for an update in respect of the collection of nmr samples run by the service. GDS replied that he had only had a verbal conversation where ideas as to how to control the abandoned nmr tubes were discussed, though as yet no formal procedures or risk assessments had been put in place. JCW asked that GS write to Chris Muryn about the issue.

Christine Taylor, Helen Kreissl and one more female will undertake the first aid course to address the lack of female first aiders in the building. It was noted that all security staff were also first aid trained though this would not address the problem as most security staff members are male.

JCW was very pleased that the School of Chemistry was recently awarded the Athena Bronze award though a little disappointed because we originally applied for the Silver award. He mentioned that the gender balance of School Committees must be considered before a Silver award could be obtained. SH replied that in his opinion he felt that the gender balance of the committee was representative of the genders of various groups of staff in the School.

EMA apologised to the committee that she had not managed to get the updated CRA form or complete the cost benefit analysis of diphoterine and safety showers due to preparations for the HSE visit. These items should be kept on the agenda.

4. Correspondence

A note had been circulated within the School reminding personnel that laboratory notebooks must not be taken out of the building due to concerns about research ethics and protection against litigation. EMA raised the issue of statutory limitation and a potential requirement for off site storage. JCW stated that he would discuss it with Risk and Compliance when they next visited him in 11 months time.

A safety circular was received reminding people of how to safely dispose of batteries following an incident at the beginning of summer when there was a fire in a refuse collection vehicle as a result of some lithium batteries being crushed.

An audit of acetylene cylinders had been carried out.

5. Chairman's Business

None.

6. Latest accidents/incidents

A liquid nitrogen dewar fell on top of a technician when the wheels caught on a raised cill in a doorway. Fortunately there were no injuries.

A light and some ceiling surround fell onto member of staff, though no serious injuries are believed to have been sustained, and there was no lost time, thus the accident was a non-RIDDOR reportable.

7. Latest near misses

No near misses were officially reported. However there was a couple of out of hours call outs when an oxygen depletion monitor had malfunctioned six months after installation and there had been a water leak on the first floor.

The fire alarm had gone off while EMA was on holiday. This was attributed to contractors spraying paint in the lift shaft.

8. HSE Visit

The HSE visited the School on 31 August. Their focus was on the Centre for Nanoporous Materials where they visited a laboratory in the Chemistry building and a couple in the MIB. The inspection went very well and there was nothing that the HSE wished to note in writing.

The HSE visit also prompted a thorough tidy up of laboratories and disposal of unwanted chemicals and equipment. The School was able to offer a Chemical amnesty which totalled in the region of £19000. JCW was concerned that old chemicals were being hoarded rather than being disposed of regularly. JCW noted that the HSE visit prompted him to re-read the School and University's safety policies again which he found useful and he asked that these be circulated to PI's in due course. He also asked that the University Research policy be circulated.

9. Slips trips and falls

Two documents were circulated to Committee members relating to slips, trips and falls, which result in a significant number of accidents in the University. She asked for comments and ideas on what we can do to lower these accidents. SH mentioned that the time that floors are cleaned is sometimes inappropriate, e.g. cleaning a cafeteria floor around lunchtime.

10. Appropriate clothing in laboratories.

EMA had attended a meeting where the question had been asked whether the type of clothing worn could have influenced the likelihood or severity of an accident.

PQ thought it would be useful if the school had some policy on what clothing was suitable for laboratory work. The committee had concerns over any clothing with artificial fibres, shorts, scarves and sandals/flip flops. GDS mentioned that laboratory temperature played a big part in the clothing that was worn by the researchers. In hot weather laboratory coats tend not to be worn but when the labs are cold a lab coat provides an extra layer. JM expressed his concern that wearing lab coats could in some circumstances create more safety issues than it solved. He suggested that for every activity it should be considered whether wearing a lab coat would improve safety. DB stated that in MIB the wearing of a lab coat was a mandatory requirement for any practical work. After discussion it was recommended that the wearing of lab coats when in a chemistry (as a pose to a computational) laboratory should be mandatory and this proposal should be taken to the Management Committee for ratification. This would apply to all members of staff.

SH said he would like the policy to go further than just making a lab coats mandatory and suggested that general guidelines regarding appropriate clothing be adopted.

GDS asked whether this policy would also apply to the pupil visitors to the mass spectrometry and nmr laboratories. It was decided that this would not be required, though if the wearing of safety spectacles in these areas was mandatory then they would be issued.

It was also decided that there should be a policy for the laundering of lab-coats which would require that these are laundered at least monthly. It was noted that under no circumstances should laboratory coats be taken home for washing.

11. MIB update

DB reported that there had been a fire evacuation in the MIB building due to a water leak. The alarm sounded intermittently and could not be silenced so people tried to evacuate the building. However as the alarm was only intermittent the main door barriers did not open and remained on swipe access, thus the foyer became very congested.

12. Latest inspection /Arrangements for inspections

Latest inspections

No inspections were carried out since the last meeting.

Future inspections

EMA informed the committee that there would be 7 inspections undertaken before the next meeting.

13. AOB

JCW asked GDS to organise a date for the next meeting

GDS expressed his concern about the way compressed gas cylinders and cryogenic vessels were transported about the building.

He had noted that cryogenic vessels were moved around the Chemistry building by people wearing no safety glasses and sometimes dressed inappropriately. Some compressed gases were being transported by people without steel toe capped boots and in some instances wearing sandals. EMA replied that it was approximately 60. SH stated that as part of his NEBOSH diploma project compressed gas cylinders were highlighted as one area of some concern. After discussion JCW asked that a safety circular be issued to remind researchers of good practice when transporting compressed gas cylinders and cryogenics.

GDS was concerned about the temperature of laboratory GE.06. During August the temperature reached 30 °C with the temperature in excess of 25 °C for most of the month. GDS also expressed concerns that the fire compartmentation and the negative pressure regime was being compromised by the internal fire doors at the entrance of the laboratory being propped open. JCW asked for EMA to write to estates regarding the issue.

SH raised the question should Chairman's business be renamed Chair's business. It was pointed out that while this name may be much more appropriate Chairman's business would not be appearing on the agenda again.