

# School of Life Sciences

## Health and Safety Management Committee Meeting

### 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005

**Present**

Professor CP Downes (CPD; Chair), Professor S Black (SB), Professor AH Fairlamb (AHF), Dr C Halpin (CH), Professor DG Hardie (DGH), Dr NR Helps (NRH), Professor AI Lamond (AIL), Dr EL Newman (ELN), Dr WGF Whitfield (WGF), Ms G Alexander (GA), Ms L Grayson (LG; Minutes), Mrs M Lacey (ML), Mr IR Leith (IRL).

**Apologies**

Professor DA Cantrell (DAC), Dr J Elliott (JE), Professor GM Gadd (GMG), Dr IG Scragg (IGS), Professor CA Tickle (CAT), Professor Cj Weijer (CJW), Mrs I Blair (IB).

**ACTION**

**1. Welcome to New Members**

CPD introduced SB and welcomed her to the Committee.

Paper A

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were approved.

**Matters Arising**

a) Feedback from Divisions on CIR Liquid Nitrogen Cell Storage Facility

Division Heads present at the meeting had nothing to report. CPD asked all Division Heads to ensure this item is tabled on the agenda of their next Divisional Meeting. IRL noted that Cell Biology & Immunology and Cell & Developmental Biology had discussed this issue. General consensus was that the CIR facility would be useful for long term storage/archiving but it would be desirable to keep current stocks within the labs for quick and easy access. CPD asked IRL to issue a memo setting out the rationale behind the central cell storage facility. AIL asked for Lab Managers/Divisional Secretaries to be notified directly of any H&S issue that this Committee requires to be included on Divisional Meeting agendas. LG to ensure this is done from now on. AHF asked about facilities for storage of Category 2/3 samples. IRL said that the possibility of a dedicated tank could be discussed and pointed out that that storage will be vapour phase only, thereby removing the risk of cross-contamination during storage. AHF also enquired about security of the facility. IRL confirmed that each storage tank and the room itself will be secure.

**HoD**

**IRL**

**LG**

b) Strategic Changes to SLS Health & Safety Management System

LG drew the Committee's attention to the revised SLS H&S Policy and highlighted the sections that have been updated as a result of the strategic changes to the SLS H&S Management System. LG asked the Committee to approve the revised document. Committee gave its approval. LG to finalise the document, issue the new version and withdraw all previous versions.

**LG**

c) Basic Training Checklist Compliance Rates

LG explained the difficulties in calculating an accurate compliance rate, but assured the Committee that there had been a marked increase. LG acknowledged that there was room for further improvement. LG asked for the Committee's approval to continue with the current approach. Committee gave its approval. LG to give progress report at next meeting.

**LG**

d) New Biological Safety Officer Appointments

CPD reported that Dr Nicola Stanley-Wall had agreed to take on the role of BSO for the Division of Environmental & Applied Biology. LG pointed out that DAC and DGH had yet to nominate someone to take on the role of Divisional BSO. DGH acknowledged this. LG to issue a reminder to DAC.

**LG**

e) Lone and Out-of-Hours Working

LG highlighted the key changes to the Lone and Out-of-Hours Working Policy and suggested that it be implemented in 2006. LG proposed that only personnel being recruited on or after 1/1/06 will be required to complete the Lone & Out-of-Hours Worker's Questionnaire but, in all other aspects, the policy will apply to new and existing personnel. Committee accepted this proposal and gave its approval for the policy to be implemented in Jan 2006. LG to circulate the relevant information to all

**LG**

personnel. ELN reported that all Resource Unit Staff had completed the questionnaire and that the exercise yielded some useful information.

### 3. Minutes of Health & Safety Committee Meeting and Matters Arising

#### a) Increased Traffic Through Labs

CPD informed the Committee that there had been complaints about the number of people using the CIR/WTB labs as corridors to get to and from the CIR labs, meeting rooms and Reception Desk. The recommendation at the moment is for personnel to travel outwith the buildings between WTB and CIR Receptions in all but the most inclement weather conditions. LG asked if a covered walkway could be provided. CPD said that this might be considered, in future, but certainly not in the short term. After much debate about the convenience and safety issues relating to alternative routes, CPD made the following decision: those equipped to travel safely through a lab, i.e. those trained in laboratory H&S and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, should be allowed to do so; those not equipped to travel safely through a lab should be instructed to travel via the outside of the WTB/CIR or use the basement corridor. Committee approved this decision. LG to circulate this information. NRH suggested having umbrellas available at both reception areas. H&S Working Group to look into this.

LG  
H&SWG

#### b) Castors on Lab Chairs

IRL explained that the company furnishing CIR with chairs would not fit castors to chairs above a certain height - apparently, to do so would contravene an industry standard - nor would they supply castors separately in the knowledge that the customer planned to fit them to said chairs. LG had asked Safety Services for advice and they recommended that the industry standard is followed. IRL explained that chairs of a lower height, i.e. those that allow the user's feet to be firmly planted on the ground at all times, can be obtained with castors fitted, hence the reason the office chairs have castors. IRL also pointed out that the industry standard changed after the WTB was kitted out, explaining why WTB lab chairs are fitted with castors. AIL expressed his dismay at what he considered to be an asinine approach that will do nothing other than undermine the credibility of SLS H&S. LG sympathised, but said that the SLS H&S were not in a position to overrule the advice given thus far. After further debate, CPD finally stated that, as the person ultimately responsible for H&S within SLS, he wishes to follow the advice of the supplier and Safety Services. LG to inform the relevant parties.

LG

#### c) Attitudes to Health & Safety

CPD emphasised the need for a change in H&S attitudes and culture, lead by the School's Principal Investigators. AHF supported this, stressing the importance of people in authority following the rules in order to set a good example to their staff. AHF also highlighted the need for risk assessment to become part of the H&S culture and drew attention to the success of the self policing approach employed in his Containment Level 3 Facility. WGFW pointed out that in order for a self policing approach to work sanctions must be in place and Heads of Division must give their full backing. AHF called for more unannounced safety inspections. LG acknowledged that the internal inspection program was currently insufficient and said that the H&S Working Group would endeavour to rectify this. AHF suggested asking Safety Services to carry out such inspections. LG and IRL both suspected that Safety Services would be unable to help due to their own resource issues. AIL was surprised that this item had been raised as he could not recollect a Post Doc or student ever raising H&S concerns at a GRE Divisional Meeting. CPD said that, even if the evidence from Divisional Meetings suggests that the blasé attitude to H&S is not as widespread as some people may think, this Committee is not complacent and, with the cooperation of the research community, it will continually strive to improve H&S attitudes, culture and performance throughout the School.

H&SWG

### 4. Risk Assessment

#### a) Stress Risk Assessment

GA drew the Committee's attention to Paper E, the University Policy on Management of Stress at Work, summarised the School's strategy for implementing this policy and gave an account of what had been achieved thus far. GA asked the Committee to give approval for the H&S Working Group to proceed as planned. The Committee gave its approval. GA to give a progress report at the next meeting.

GA

#### b) General Risk Assessment Progress

LG summarised the progress that has been made to date and admitted that it has been slower than initially anticipated. However, the Risk Assessment Database is proving to be a useful resource and the H&S Working Group wishes to continue with the current approach. The Committee gave their approval. LG to give a progress report at the next meeting.

LG

## 5. Drug Precursor Legislation: Appointment of Compliance Officer

CPD agreed to take on the role of Compliance Officer, as per the recommendation in Safety Services' memo on the subject. CPD will delegate the tasks associated with the role to the H&S Working Group. LG to issue an email to all laboratory personnel explaining how the Drug Precursor legislation will affect them.

LG

## 6. Disaster Recovery Plan Review

GA explained that the Disaster Recovery Plan is currently being updated to include the CIR Building. GA will use this review as an opportunity to remind staff named in the plan of their responsibilities. GA stressed the importance of Principal Investigators regularly reviewing their own local disaster recovery arrangements.

## 7. Accident Statistics for 2005

LG suggested that, rather than just looking at the statistics, it may be more useful to examine the most notable accidents/incidents and discuss what can be learned from them. Committee agreed to do this at future meetings.

## 8. AOCB

### a) SLS Policy on Wearing Lab Coats

LG issued a paper detailing a draft policy on the wearing of lab coats in SLS buildings. CPD explained why this policy is necessary. CH said that there is no point in having a policy if it is not going to be enforced. CPD stated that this Committee can only recommend that the policy is adopted and that the final decision must be taken at Faculty Planning level. ML wanted it noted that, in LSTU, in general, research personnel are the biggest problem when it comes to adhering to Good Lab Practice and setting a good example to the students. NRH agreed that any individual working in a lab should wear a lab coat, and also safety glasses. There was much debate about when lab coats are/are not necessary, how rigorously the policy should be enforced and what the real risks and benefits are. CH stressed that whatever the ruling, it had to be applied across the board. CPD agreed. CPD proposed that, to begin with, the policy need only state that personnel must wear a lab coat when they are working in the lab and further details can be discussed at a later date. Committee agreed. CPD to ensure this recommendation is put forward at the next Faculty Planning, Research Management Group and Teaching Committee meetings. AHF asked for lab coats and safety glasses to be made available for visitors. LG pointed out that lab coats were already available from WTB Reception and said that she would ensure safety glasses were also provided. CPD asked the Committee members to give this issue some thought and feed back any further comments to LG.

CPD

LG  
All

### b) Fire Evacuation Procedure

AHF asked for clarification on the MSI/WTB/CIR Fire Evacuation Procedure to be issued to all personnel as soon as possible. Grave concern was expressed over the current confusion. IRL acknowledged that the "zone" approach was causing problems. LG said that a meeting with E&B and University Fire Adviser was required in order to discuss the failings and possible solutions. LG to organise this meeting and issue an email to all personnel clarifying the current procedure.

LG

### c) Smoking Outside SLS Buildings

CPD drew attention to Philip Cohen's email asking personnel to refrain from smoking at the front of the MSI/WTB/CIR Complex and to his own email reinforcing this message and expanding it to all building entrances, as per the University policy. The Committee agreed to support a complete ban on smoking at all building entrances. SB asked for this ban to extend to smoking close to air intakes and office windows, and for it to apply to students as well as staff. Committee supported this proposal. IRL to ensure smoking ban is enforced.

IRL