

College of Life Sciences

Health and Safety Management Committee Meeting

8th February 2010

Present

Professor Doreen Cantrell (DAC; Chair), Professor Daan van Aalten (DVA; attending on behalf of MAJF), Professor Sue Black (SB), Irene Blair (IB), Professor David Coates (DC), Professor Ian Gilbert (IHG; on behalf of AHF), Lisa Grayson (LG; Minutes), Professor Grahame Hardie (DGH), Dr Nick Helps (NRH), Monica Lacey (ML), Ian Leith (IRL), Dr John Lucocq (JL; attending on behalf of CW), Dr Luke Newman (ELN), Professor Tracy Palmer (TP), Dr Deena Pedrioli (DP; on behalf of IM), Dr Ian Scragg (IGS), Dr Mike Stark (MJRS; on behalf of AIL), Professor Kees Weijer (CJW)

Apologies

Professor Alan Fairlamb (AHF), Professor Mike Ferguson (MAJF), Professor Angus Lamond (AIL), Professor Irwin McLean (IM), Professor Colin Watts (CW)

ACTION

1. Welcome and Apologies

DAC welcomed everyone to the meeting, welcomed TP and DC to the Committee and ran through the list of apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved.

Matters Arising

Item 2, 2, 8c: IRL informed the Committee that the University's decision not to erect smoking shelters still stands. Several members of the Committee noted that the 6m exclusion zone policy is often not adhered to. IB asked if SB could remind lecturers to promote the policy amongst their students. DAC agreed to highlight the issue with the Post Doc and PhD Student associations.

Item 3: The H&S Policy was amended as per JRE's request and brought to the attention of all personnel via email or H&S notice boards.

Item 4ii: LG informed the Committee that implementation of the POPIMAR H&S management model had been discussed and IRL, IGS and LG agreed that if the University is going to subscribe to a specific H&S management model the initiative has to be taken by the Principal and the model applied University wide. In the mean time, CLS H&S will focus its efforts on strengthening our existing, local H&S management system.

Item 4iii: The H&S Working Group decided against asking Divisional Secretaries to get involved in compiling inspection reports. This task will remain with LG at present.

Item 4v: Lab coat spot checks are now carried out at 3 monthly intervals and the results sent to the Head of College and College Secretary for discussion at SRB and to Lab Managers for discussion at Divisional Meetings.

Item 5: The Well Being at Work Survey Action Statement, drafted by our HR Officer and published on the H&S Web Site in May 2009, outlines the measures taken in light of the 2008 survey. The 2010 survey is being run now. Results will be published on the web in due course.

Item 6: Water Cut Policy & Procedures were brought to the attention of all personnel via email.

Item 7: Procedures Governing the Use of Human Material were brought to the attention of the relevant personnel via email.

Item 8: The importance of fully implementing the Refurbishment policy and procedures has been impressed upon the relevant personnel.

Item 10: See the H&S Annual Report 2009.

3. Review and Approval of H&S Policy

There were no comments on the document from the Committee. Version 11 of the H&S Policy was approved. LG to circulate to the relevant individuals.

LG

4. CLS Annual Report 2009

LG issued the first draft of the Report in hard copy and asked the members to read through it after the meeting and feedback any comments to her as soon as possible.

ALL

5. H&S Responsibilities of Principal Investigators

DAC explained that H&S responsibilities of PIs have been clearly defined in the H&S Policy since 2003 but not all PIs are fully aware of what they are. DAC proposed that a letter detailing these responsibilities is issued to all new PIs upon induction and that all PIs receive a reminder on an annual basis either from CLS H&S via email or from the Lab Managers at Divisional meetings. LG to take this forward.

LG

IRL drew attention to the very poor attendance at the H&S Induction Seminar throughout 2009 and how badly this reflects upon the PIs. DAC agreed and asked LG to ensure that the monthly invite list and report on non attendees is brought to the attention of the relevant PIs as well as the Lab Managers who already receive these updates.

LG

6. Highly Dangerous Substances Policy

IGS summarised the reasons for drafting and implementing this policy. DP asked what constitutes a highly dangerous substance. The definition is given in the policy. SB commented on the lack of security within the MSI foyer area. There will be no easy solution to this for as long as undergraduates require access to the Large Lecture Theatre. DAC highlighted the obvious security weaknesses within the WTB atrium and proposed that the new build be used as an opportunity to review and improve upon our current security arrangements. DP enquired as to why the existing proximity locks are not activated 24/7. DAC explained that there has been strong resistance to this in the past. TP asked if Divisions could independently choose to have the perimeter of their own floor/area secured. DAC had no objection to this and IRL advised TP to contact Debbie Hill to arrange this for MSI2. DAC proposed that Committee members raise with their divisions the possibility that all doors off the WTB atrium that lead into lab areas be secured 24/7. Members to raise at their next Divisional meeting and feedback to DAC.

Division
Heads

7. Insurance Issues

i. Visitors

Are they Insured?

DAC outlined the concerns detailed in the associated paper and drew attention to our existing Procedures to Ensure the Safety of Visitors document. The subsequent discussion focused on the issuing of temporary proximity cards and how best to ensure these are only issued to authorised visitors. The Committee finally agreed that proximity cards should only be issued to visitors who are accompanied by a member of staff and submit a completed Basic H&S Training Checklist. LG to amend the Procedures accordingly and ensure the revised document is circulated to all relevant personnel, especially Divisional Secretaries and Reception staff. NRH asked that it be made clear which visitors this applies to on the assumption that one day seminar speakers and the like will be exempt. LG to make this clear in the revised Procedures document. DGH asked if proximity cards are voided once an individual leaves CLS. IRL said, yes, this is done by Reception staff. Some members of the Committee gave evidence to the contrary. LG confirmed that a procedure is in place but it needs to be tightened up. LG to raise with the Reception Manager.

LG

Child Visitors

The recent incidents highlighted in the associated paper were discussed. The Committee agreed that the existing measures detailed in the Procedures document need to be better promoted and implemented and the document should be revised to clearly state that (1) prams must not be taken through laboratory areas and (2) children are not allowed in writing rooms. LG to factor in to the reworking of the Procedures document.

LG

ii. Castors on Lab Chairs

DAC summarised the incident which brought this issue back under the spotlight and asked the Committee to reconsider the initial risk assessment and decide whether we leave the Draughtsman laboratory chairs as they are or fit glides to all those currently equipped with castors. IGS firmly communicated Safety Services opinion and strongly advised that glides are fitted. LG pointed out that

the number of incidents to date was low but accepted that the consequences could be serious. Other members of the Committee stated that the use of glides introduces equivalent risks and expressed a preference for castors. DAC asked each Committee member to consider the original risk assessment and the account of the recent incident and inform her of their own assessment of the situation and recommend a course of action. LG to email the relevant files to each member and prompt them for a response.

LG

8. Flu Pandemic and Business Continuity Plans

LG explained that the purpose of this item was simply to make the Committee members aware of what information was available on the CLS H&S web site and ask them to relay this back to their Divisions/Groups. LG noted that Business Continuity Plans are being produced by each Core Support and Scientific Service and these should prove useful outwith the flu pandemic scenario.

9. H&S Comments/Suggestions Box Pilot

DAC asked the Committee members for their opinions on the H&S Comments/Suggestions Box scheme and whether it should continue. The general consensus was that it was a worthwhile venture and the scheme should continue. IB announced that green cards for energy/environment saving suggestions are to be introduced shortly. The Committee approved of this addition to the scheme. Attention was focussed on the first comment in the associated paper referring to the damage caused by careless use of centrifuges. The accident/incident reports for 2009 show an increase in centrifuge accidents over previous years. DAC expressed grave concern over the financial implications for the College. IRL confirmed that it would not be unusual for a centrifuge accident to cost around £10k. DAC raised the issue of responsibility and suggested that one option was that PIs pay for repairs out of their own budgets from now on if it is clear that the damage occurred due to the negligence of their own staff. In particular if it was clear that a staff member used a centrifuge rotor without having had appropriate training. The Committee was clearly divided on this issue. DAC to raise at the next SRB meeting. MJRS suggested adding an item on centrifuge training to the H&S Training Checklist. LG to discuss with the Lab Managers.

DAC
LG

10. Inspections

LG summarised the inspections carried out in 2009 and the proposals for 2010. The aim is to carry out two inspections per month and ensure all general labs and TC suites are inspected at least once every two years. This is in line with Alan Fairlamb's request, emailed to LG prior to the meeting. Further details on H&S Inspection targets/proposals are given in the 2009 H&S Report.

11. Items Arising From Divisional Meetings

In March 2009 BCDD discussed a fatal accident at UCLA involving pyrophoric chemicals. A report on the tragedy in Lab Manager Magazine listed lack of appropriate PPE, i.e. a fastened lab coat, and inadequate training as two contributing factors. LG pointed out that the lessons to be learned from this event can be applied to work in our own labs, not just with pyrophoric substances but with all flammable chemicals.

DAC summarised the remainder of the associated paper containing further items from BCDD and MEM and including one item relating to renewal of core equipment. DAC deemed this topic to be more appropriate for discussion at SRB.

DAC asked if there were any other matters arising from Divisional meetings. MJRS raised the issue of glass recycling bins on behalf of GRE. Green glass bins were recently removed from the labs because they were being used almost exclusively for wine and beer bottles. Following the MRC Unit's lead, it was deemed appropriate for persons organising social functions to dispose of empty bottles or arrange to have them uplifted by the supplier. The Committee members agreed that this was perfectly reasonable. MJRS explained that GRE objected to there being no route for disposal of other non lab glass, e.g. juice bottles. LG proposed that green glass bins be redeployed for use in coffee/meeting rooms and the occasional clear glass item is allowed in the lab glass bin, but that the ruling on glass waste from social functions should stand. The Committee approved but IB pointed out that there will still be an issue about who empties the green glass bins. IB and LG to discuss with Letty Gibson.

IB/LG

12. Accidents/Incidents

IB summarised the 2009 report highlighting the microwave oven incidents and cases of sensitivity to nitrile gloves. IGS drew attention to the hydrogen gas leak on JBC Floor 1 and how serious the consequences could have been if the leaking gas had ignited. IHG gave a brief account of the incident and the corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence.

13. AOCB

IGS informed the Committee that new legislation is coming into force later in the year that will impact on our work with wild type and GM microorganisms. It is highly likely that we will be required to renotify existing projects under transitional provisions and submit additional notifications for previously exempt projects. The HSE are under pressure to cost recover and this will undoubtedly precipitate an increase in existing fees and some new charges. LG pointed out that the current GM risk assessment review will leave us well prepared for the transitional period and asked Division Heads to underline the importance of participating in the review process to their PIs and ask them all to respond to the memo issued by LG on behalf of DVA, the current Chair of the City Campus GM and Biological Safety Committee. TP informed LG that she had not received the email sent on behalf of DVA. LG to send email to TP. CJW asked if there was a mechanism for flagging emails that require action to distinguish them from those that are purely for information. DP suggested adding 'FOR ACTION' to the subject field. LG will apply this to H&S related emails from now on.

**Division
Heads**

LG

14. Date of Next Meeting

To be arranged.

LG