

To Deans, HoFAs, HOSs, Directors

From Dr Melanie Taylor, Head of Safety Services; Dr Martin Hampar, Insurance Office

Date 12 April 2012

cc Mr W Spinks, Prof N Thakker, Dr D Barker, School Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives

Reference Safety Circular 3/2012

Safety of pressure systems

Action: HOSs please:

- (1) Note the legal requirements for ensuring the safety of pressure systems, and the need for periodic examinations by competent and independent persons.
- (2) Ensure that all relevant pressure systems under their control meet the requirements of the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000, and check that thorough examinations are carried out by Allianz (the University's current service provider) in accordance with a written scheme of examination prepared by them.

The University reported a RIDDOR dangerous occurrence in December 2011, where the entire contents of a 900 litre carbon dioxide pressurised storage vessel leaked into a building. Fortunately, the oxygen deficiency alarms worked as they should have done and the response from Security and the school ensured that no-one was injured.

The detailed in-house investigation drew attention to a potential gap in the University's arrangements for ensuring that such vessels have a "written scheme of examination" as required under the **Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000**¹, and that their safety devices are examined in accordance with that scheme. Earlier this year, all relevant school safety advisors were asked to supply details of pressure systems qualifying under these regulations and their current arrangements for maintenance and a competent person's examinations. Schools returned a comprehensive listing, and it became apparent that there were other systems without a written scheme, typically systems "owned" by schools and building occupiers rather than by Estates and Facilities, and typically (but not exclusively) mobile units such as 200-300 litre liquid nitrogen vessels. Cases of confusion about who was responsible for such equipment were also reported (eg where a school runs a compressor to an experiment set-up but the compressor is housed in an Estates plant room or riser).

The University maintains a central contract for the statutory examinations of pressure vessels and lifting equipment throughout the campus, and for its subsidiary undertakings. The contract is linked to insurance cover in respect of breakdown of examined equipment and damage to other University property in the case of the rupture of a pressure vessel. The cost of the contract is met from the University central insurance budget and is not recharged to users. The current contractor is Allianz Engineering Inspection Services Ltd.

Our survey shows that some schools already use Allianz for all their pressure system examinations, but others use equipment suppliers (typically BOC) or other bodies, and in some cases, have assumed that supplier maintenance contracts fulfil all the statutory duties.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2000/128/contents/made>

They do not. (It may be useful to think of the difference in terms of a car main dealer service compared with an MOT.)

There are significant advantages using the University's insurance examination arrangements for all cases where the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations apply.

The use of the central contract provides for the examination regime to be independent of the supply and maintenance arrangements. Damage to property arising from a failure is not covered unless Allianz carry out the examination, and the cost is met centrally.

In the near future, your School Safety Advisor will be contacted by Allianz examination engineers or Rob Derbyshire from the Safety Office, to go through your list of pressure systems, to check the missing details and documentation, and to liaise with schools about implementing any new arrangements. Rob can also assist in cases where the responsibility for the system is in doubt.

Please note that there is still a requirement to maintain the equipment. In many cases, too, the competent person's examination will need to be timed to coincide with a routine maintenance visit by another company so that safety devices can be safely examined and tested. The Safety Office and Insurance Office are also liaising with Allianz about obtaining access to their database so that schools will be able to manage their own records of examination in future.

There is more information about the application of the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations and written schemes of examinations at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg261.pdf> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg178.pdf>

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