

Memo

To Safety Co-ordinators (for onward transmission to school safety advisors)

From Dr Melanie Taylor, University Safety Advisor

Date 16th March 2005.

Distribution Dr S A Robson

Reference Safety Circular 4/2005

Transilluminators

A postgraduate student in FLS recently suffered severe but thankfully temporary damage to her eyes after using a transilluminator to visualise DNA gels.

This incident, which has been reported to the HSE, has highlighted a number of issues that must be addressed in your risk assessments.

- Transilluminators should always be used with the guards in place – this is a legal requirement*. Personal eye protection, such as a face shield, should be considered as a control measure of last resort (eg where it is not physically possible to guard the source).
- Where there is a residual risk of exposure to harmful uv radiation, users must wear full face visors made of a material which does not transmit the radiation being used. Suitable visors are usually available from the equipment suppliers. General purpose laboratory safety spectacles are NOT suitable, and must *never* be used as a substitute. This should be explicitly stated in the risk assessment.
- Any protective shields must be maintained in good condition, clean and scratch-free. It is recommended that two are provided for each work area where transilluminators are used, and that each is provided with its own hook or other safe storage location, to reduce the risk of general wear and tear.
- The risk assessment should also address the risk to persons other than the users of transilluminators, in particular, those people who might walk into the work area unannounced, or who might be exposed to reflected radiation or radiation emitted around the sides of the guard.
- All users of transilluminators should receive information about the hazards of uv radiation, and training in the use of control measures. Courses are available through the Staff Development and Training Unit. Further advice is available from Helen Walsh in the Radiation Safety Unit, ext 56981, e-mail: helen.walsh@manchester.ac.uk.

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* Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998