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To Deans of Faculty, Heads of Schools & Directorates, Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives (via safety co-ordinators)

From Dr Melanie Taylor, University Safety Advisor

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Distribution Dr S A Robson, Prof P Heggs, T Humphreys, J Bridger, R Valentine

Reference Circular 12/2006

Ladders & Step Ladders

Over the past few weeks, at this University, there have been 3 reported falls from ladders or step ladders, each resulting in significant injuries and absence from work. The circumstances vary and investigations are still underway, but it is important to note and understand the legal requirements of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. An earlier safety circular refers to these in detail (and is available at

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/Safety_Circulars/2005/8-2005WorkatHeightReqsApr05.doc

Falls from height remain the most common cause of fatal injury and the second most common cause of major injury to employees, accounting for around 15% of all such injuries. For this reason, work at height is one of the HSE's priority action areas, and there is an excellent section on the use of ladders on their website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders.htm>

Managers are reminded that :

- safer alternatives to using ladders must always be considered and used wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so, but
- ladders will sometimes be the most appropriate tool for certain jobs of short duration (eg less than 30 minutes) and low risk.
- where ladders are selected for use, there must be a risk assessment to justify their use, appropriate levels of supervision must be provided, and users must be trained in the risks involved and how to eliminate or control them.

Training should include an understanding of how falls from ladders occur, selection of the correct ladder for the work, on-site checks for the ladder to be used, correct positioning and setting up, and safe working from the ladder. Training courses are available from the STDU, and managers should ensure that even experienced users of ladders have attended a course since the 2005 Work at Height Regulations came into effect.

The Safety Office has available some hard copies of the pocket-sized reminder cards (text is at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg405.pdf>).

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