

Memo

To Safety Co-ordinators (for onward transmission to schools with responsibility for laboratories)

From Dr Melanie Taylor, University Safety Advisor

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Distribution Dr S Robson

Reference Safety Circular 3/2005

Sonicators

Safety staff at another UK university have recently circulated information about a particular make of sonicator (equipment that uses ultrasound to disrupt, disintegrate or homogenise cell structures). During a routine portable appliance test, they failed the new sonicator because very little of the exposed metal was earthed. Its "English" plug was also badly wired and fitted with a grossly overrated fuse, incompatible with the cable to which it was attached. They reached the conclusion that the combination of faults could cause a fatal electric shock to an operator. A replacement sonicator failed in the same way, so the faults appear to be basic design faults.

The instrument is a "SONOPLUS HD 2070 with English plug", manufactured by "BANDELIN electronic" from Berlin, who may also use the name "SONOREX". It was supplied by "PROGEN SCIENTIFIC Ltd." from Mexborough, Yorkshire.

All School Safety Advisors are asked to check existing sonicators of this make and ensure that portable appliance tests are up-to-date. Sonicators failing in the way described above should be taken out of use immediately. Please liaise with your Faculty Safety Co-ordinator if you find any, as they will be kept informed about what steps to take next. Please also note that this fault was found during a routine PAT of a *new* piece of equipment, reinforcing the need to include new equipment in your PAT procedures.

Dr Melanie Taylor
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