

To Vice-Presidents/Deans, Heads of Schools, HoFAs, Director of Estates

From Dr Melanie Taylor

Date 5 November 2008

cc Prof M Case, Dr D Barker, Dr S A Robson, School Safety
Representatives
Mrs R Valentine, T Graham

Reference Safety Circular 8/2008

Survey of acetylene cylinders, 2008

Heads of science and engineering schools will already be aware of the significant implications of acetylene cylinders involved (or suspected of being involved) in fires. See, for example, the University's procedure at

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/CoPs&Guidance/acetylene_and_risks_in_fires-p.doc and guidance at

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/CoPs&Guidance/acetylene_and_risks_in_fires-g.doc

The Health & Safety Executive's guidance to its own inspectors is summarised at

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/hid/din/560.pdf>

It remains the case that where fire fighters believe acetylene cylinders are present, they will probably evacuate and set up an exclusion zone of 200m radius for 24 hours or more (causing disruption to major arterial road and rail routes and to building occupants); not enter the building to fight any fire, and discharge very large volumes of water into the site. For these reasons, schools have been asked to notify the Safety Office of the presence of any acetylene cylinder, so that locations can be noted on fire risk assessments and relevant information passed to the GM Fire Service.

The original baseline survey was in 2006, and University Safety Coordinators will shortly ask school safety advisors to update this information.

We should seek to minimise our use and stocks of acetylene. Whilst it is inevitable that some uses are justifiable and unavoidable, Heads of School and other senior managers are asked to confirm the need to retain each cylinder(s) on the attached form, and to be robust in challenging their continued presence. With next-day delivery arrangements, it should never be necessary to keep "spares". In many cases, it is not necessary to use acetylene for welding and cutting; there are replacements and alternatives.

For your information, there is a national group looking into the whole question of emergency responses to gas cylinders in fires, see

http://www.bcgga.co.uk/preview/news/Cylinders_in_Fire-The_National_Stakeholder_Group.pdf

Dr Melanie Taylor
University Safety Advisor

Form A1: Notification of acetylene cylinders

School / Directorate	
Cylinder location (exact room / lab, floor, building)	
Cylinder size	
Use of cylinder (eg analysis, workshop cutting, etc)	
Risk assessment	Please attach copy.
Persons using cylinder (names and positions)	
Signatures: Person in charge of cylinder (eg Principal Investigator) School / Directorate Safety Advisor Head of School	 (sign and print) (sign and print) (sign and print)
Date	

Return completed form to:

Safety Office, Waterloo Place, 180 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PG
or by email to melanie.j.taylor@manchester.ac.uk, with a copy to your University Safety Co-ordinator