

To Vice-President/Deans, Heads of Schools, HoFAs

From Dr Melanie Taylor

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cc Prof M Case, Dr S A Robson, Dr D Barker, G Rowe
School Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives

Reference Safety Circular 11/2007

Equipment left operating overnight etc.

Senior managers are asked to check their arrangements for equipment left running for long periods of time, particularly when unattended overnight, over weekends or longer holidays. This could be carried out during a routine school safety inspection, as spot checks, or as part of a longer-term monitoring exercise.

There are many examples of good practice in controlling the risks that arise from such equipment. There are however also examples of where procedures are not sufficiently robust. I am aware of a few instances recently where Security have been called out to attend alarms or they have come across situations of concern, but have not have adequate information about how to proceed safely. The same difficulties would apply if the Emergency Incident procedure is initiated.

Local arrangements will need to vary depending on the circumstances, but good practice demands that they include the following elements:

- brief details of the process and list of chemicals in use securely attached to, or closely associated with, the equipment;
- some form of permit signed by a responsible person such as a lab manager (Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science (CEAS) use a pink overnight duplicate permit); the permit should be dated, and renewed when changes are made to the equipment;
- clear information attached to the equipment, describing the safe shut-down procedure or giving instructions to Security or other emergency services;
- emergency contact details of someone who can respond appropriately and provide immediate advice - this may refer to lists of school contacts maintained by HOS / HOSA / Heads of other support services, as appropriate, but must be made available to Security (either in hard copy nearby or clear directions about how to obtain the information);
- risk / COSHH assessments readily available to attending fire crews, emergency services;
- a monitoring system for ensuring that information remains updated and accurate. One of the recent situations involved contact information from 2004 which was no longer valid.

For further assistance, please contact your usual University Safety Co-ordinator. Further guidance (including a permit-to-work pro forma) is at

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/CoPs&Guidance/overnight_equipment-guidance.doc

I am grateful to the Schools of CEAS and Materials for providing details of their systems.

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