

COU09D052

## 2009 Health & Safety Report to Council

### 1. Executive Summary

This is the second annual report to Council from the University Health and Safety Executive (UHASE). It summarizes work undertaken by UHASE and its committees during the past year and presents a work plan for the coming year. This report also presents health and safety performance information over time to allow comparison to previous years and equivalent universities.

The UEA Corporate Plan (2008 to 2012) places a strategic requirement to "Maintain high standards in all areas of corporate responsibility and provide regular reports to Council on the discharge of those responsibilities. (M7)" This report is presented to comply with the reporting requirement, under this strategy, with regards to the management of health and safety standards.

Health and safety laws place duties on the university as an employer and as an owner, and occupier, of premises. Members of Council have responsibility, under these laws, for ensuring suitable health and safety management arrangements are in place at the university. The university's health and safety management arrangements are designed to ensure that corporate aims, legal obligations and moral duties are being met.

#### 1.1 Summary of performance data

The average level of employee absence has reduced significantly to 6.68 days per employee in 2009 from 7.61 days per employee for the previous 12 months. This compares favourably to the benchmarking figures for all employers for 2008 (2009 data not yet available) which was 7.4 days per employee (all employers) and which was 9.7 days per employee (public sector employers).

Accident rates are at a similar level to 2008, which is slightly below the university's own average over the last 5 years. Serious (reportable) accidents were at a low level for UEA and in line with the higher education sector target.

There were no serious fires on the university's premises in 2009.

False fire alarms are continuing to be a problem in the university's student residences. The total number of false alarms is still increasing. The improvement due to an encouraging 25% reduction in shower steam activations of the fire alarm systems has been negated by a 60% increase in those due to malicious actions.

## **2. Activities of UHASE and the University Safety Committees in 2009**

### **2.1 UHASE**

UHASE has met in February and in November 2009.

#### **UHASE**

- considered the situation with regard to false fire alarms in residences and tasked
  - o Estates to continue with their work on addressing problems with detectors and ventilation systems.
  - o the Dean of Students to review guidance for disciplinary action for students.
- approved the setting up of a Steering Group to review, revise and implement the university policy on stress management.
- discussed the need for alcohol, drug and substance abuse policies and forwarded draft proposals for a staff policy to the Consultative Committee.
- considered and approved proposals for a project to improve evacuation facilities, for persons unable to use stairs, in ARTS, the Library and the Lecture Theatre Block.
- considered and forwarded, to the Consultative Committee, a draft H&S training strategy.

### **2.2 Consultative Committee**

The Consultative Committee met in October 2009 and January 2010.

#### **The Committee**

- established its terms of reference and determined to meet 4 times per year.
- considered and provided input on draft stress policy, the Health and Safety policy, the draft training strategy, the draft alcohol policy and auditing.

### **2.3 Biological Hazards and Genetic Modification Committee**

The Biological Hazards and Genetic Modification Committee met in February and October 2009, and in February 2010.

#### **The Committee**

- received and considered reports on on-going microbiological and genetic modification work
- received and considered reports on progress in establishing management arrangements and in starting work in the Wolfson Laboratory for Emerging Pathogens
- considered and made revisions to the university procedures for microbiological and genetic modification work.
- considered and reviewed the competencies of review panels, which review and approve Containment Level 1 and 2 projects.
- considered a report on the impending Biological Agents and Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 2010.

### **2.4 Fire Safety Committee**

The Fire Safety Committee met in January, March, and November 2009 and in January 2010.

### The Committee

- discussed:
  - o training for Security staff on new fire system
  - o malicious activations of fire alarms
  - o steam activations of smoke detectors
  - o progress on fire risk assessments
  - o a project to revise the fire strategy for the teaching wall
  - o fire safety signage
  - o evacuation chairs

### 2.5 Human Tissues Committee

The Human Tissue Committee met in November 2009.

#### The Committee

- discussed revisions required to the universities procedures due to revised Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority.
- received and considered reports on work involving human tissues

### 2.6 Radiation Protection Committee

The Radiation Protection Committee met in January 2009 and February 2010.

#### The Committee

- reviewed data on
  - o usage and disposal of radioactive substances
  - o radiation dose records
- received and considered reports from the university's Radiation Protection Adviser
- received and considered a report on an Environment Agency inspection, which took place in November 2009
- reviewed and approved rules for the use of ultraviolet radiation sources in laboratories
- reviewed and approved a revised version of the university's Radiation Protection Rules.
- resolved that a radon survey should be undertaken in basement areas.
- considered a report on the Control of Artificial Optical Radiation at Work Regulations 2010, due to become law on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

## **3. Progress on UHASE programme for 2009**

1. Stress management – a steering group will be set up, and a project plan established, to review, revise and implement revised arrangements for managing stress.

*A Steering Group has been established and will meet and to progress issues in 2010.*

2. A training strategy will be developed to ensure that staff and students have appropriate competencies for addressing risks associated with university activities.

*A draft training strategy has been produced and was supplied, for comment, to the Consultative Committee prior to approval by UHASE in 2010.*

3. A member of Safety Services will attend a HASMAP training course and then undertake pilot

audits of the university's arrangements using this system.

*HASMAP training was attended in July. A full permanent rolling programme of safety management audits will be provided to UHASE at its first meeting in 2010.*

4. A plan, and programme, to implement measures to reduce the causes of false fire alarms in the university residences will be established by UHASE's Fire Safety Committee.

*Work by Estates, overseen by the Fire Safety Committee, is ongoing.*

#### 4. **UHASE programme for 2010**

1. The implementation of the newly revised stress management arrangements..

2. Auditing to a defined rolling 3 year programme of health and safety management audits will be established. Auditing will be undertaken with reference to national occupational H&S standards as well as to the higher education sector Hasmap standard.

3. Implementation of the university's health and safety training strategy.

4. Progression of the programme to further reduce the numbers of false fire alarms in the university residences.

#### 5. **Health and safety performance**

##### 5.1 Health statistics

###### **Sickness absence**

Reported sickness absence continues to be recorded centrally on the HR and Payroll system, ResourceLink, since 2007. The data generated is used proactively to manage sickness absence which falls within the University's definitions of long-term and short-term sickness absence and allows for the regular reporting and monitoring of sickness absence.

###### **Reportable Diseases**

There were no cases of reportable disease in 2009. Reportable diseases are those identified in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

##### 5.2 Accidents

An *accident* is any incident which results in personal injury, however minor (out of or in connection with work). *Reportable* accidents are described in the following section (serious injuries).

Accident rates in 2009 were below the levels of the previous 5 years. Only accidents involving members of the public (i.e. non-staff and non-students) were higher than in recent years. Comparisons with previous years are made below:

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	<b>2009</b>
Total	278	309	305	266	260	<b>252</b>
Staff	223	257	240	204	186	<b>179</b>
Students	28	22	32	38	41	<b>26</b>
Others	27	30	30	24	33	<b>47</b>
Reportable	12	10	8	17	8	<b>13</b>

The numbers of accidents are small and equate approximately to one accident for every 20 years of service for each staff member and one accident for about every 500 years of study for each student and therefore it is important not to read any particular significance into the year by year changes of these accident numbers. It would not be unreasonable to surmise that for the average student and the average staff member that the rate of accidents are higher than this and that these figures may likely indicate under-reporting of accidents.

### **Serious injuries**

Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), certain of the more serious accidents which are associated with a work activity must be reported to the Health & Safety Executive. In the case of employees, these reportable accidents are divided into *deaths, major injuries, over 3-day injuries* (accidents which result in incapacity for work for more than three consecutive days), and *dangerous occurrences* (certain incidents which have the potential for causing serious injury without actually having done so). We are also required to report to HSE any accident to a non-employee which results in the person being taken to hospital for further treatment immediately after the accident.

There were 13 reportable accidents in 2009. There were no major injuries, but there were 4 accidents to students and members of the public which resulted in the injured persons attending hospital. These 4 accidents were:

- lacerations to the face, neck, arms, hands and legs of a member of public when the person fell back onto a glass door of a squash court, while playing squash, and the door shattered.
- a student got a piece of glass in their eye when a beaker fell and smashed near to them
- a student twisted an ankle as a result of tripping while walking down stairs.
- a child lacerated their leg on a broken tile after slipping on some steps.

Of the other 9 reported accidents (**over three day** accidents) 4 were due to slips and trips, 2 were due to manual handling, one due to a cut while using machinery and 2 were due to muscle strains.

### **Dangerous Occurrences**

There was one reportable dangerous gas fitting in 2009:

- during refurbishment work a contractor removed a bench top gas tap leaving an open ended gasway overnight.

### **Comparison to other national accident figures**

It can be difficult to compare accident rates at the university with those of others in the sector because there may be different accident reporting behaviours. At some universities, staff and students may be very good at reporting accidents resulting in their universities having poor accident rates relative to the poorer reporting universities. This may particularly be true with

regard to minor injuries (major injuries and over 3 day injuries are more likely to be recorded due to absence from, or inability to, work).

Accident rates are more likely to be higher in the occupations where manual work and other physical activities take place (such as maintenance, catering and cleaning). At universities where such services have been placed with contractors there will be a higher proportion of lower risk occupations in the staff work force and so one would expect lower accident rates at these universities. Unfortunately national data for accident rates at universities does not provide information on the breakdown of occupations within staff work forces. UEA has contracted out very little of its maintenance, catering and cleaning work.

A comparison of UEA injuries per 1000 at risk with other Higher Education establishments, in 2009, is given in the table below

		<b>Other HEs 2009</b>	<b>UEA 2009</b>
<b>Staff</b>	Major Injury	0.4	0
	Over 3-day absence injury	1.8	2.8
	<b>Total injury</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>56.2</b>
<b>Students</b>	Major injury	0.02	0
	Sent to hospital	0.12	0.14
	<b>Total injury</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>

In 2000 the government set up an initiative to 'Revitalise Health and Safety'. Sectors in the economy were expected to set targets to be met by the year 2010. The following table compares the rate of staff RIDDOR reportable accidents at UEA in recent years to the Revitalising targets for the higher education sector (injuries per 1000 at risk). Slips and trips are the biggest cause of major injuries nationally and manual handling injuries are the biggest cause of over 3 day injuries. These types of injuries were therefore chosen by UCEA, in agreement with the Health and Safety Executive, as appropriate categories for which to have target rates in the HE sector.

	Reportable Total	Manual Handling	Slips and falls
UEA 2006	3.2	0.4	2.0
UEA 2007	6.3	2.0	2.0
UEA 2008	2.7	0.0	1.9
<b>UEA 2009</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Sector Average 2009	2.2	0.8	1.0
Revitalising Target	3.6	0.8	0.8

The following table compares the rates of accidents (injuries per 1000 at risk) at UEA with the rates at six other similar universities (Bath, Kent, Lancaster, Surrey, Warwick and York). UEA figures are given in **bold italics**. The individual identities of the other universities are not known. The staff reportable rate for UEA in 2009 is 2.82.

Staff Reportable Rate	Staff Total Rate	Student Reportable Rate	Student Total Rate
1.85	71.48	0.38	2.5
1.87	27.3	0.07	1.12
2.2	57.23	0.09	5.19
2.52	45.82	0	1.18
<b>2.82</b>	<b>56.18</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>1.82</b>
5.08	55.89	0.38	3.44
5.99	82.48	0.04	1.4

**Average figures for group:**

<b>3.19</b>	<b>56.63</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>2.38</b>
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### 5.3 Reported fires (Events caused by smoke or heat activating the fire alarm systems)

Date	Building/Area	Cause Of Fire
10/01/09	Mary Chapman Court Kitchen	Fire in overheated pan.
16/02/09	Drama Studio Office	Smoke from melting plastic surround of light
15/04/09	SCVA Exhibition Area	Electrical fault in light installation exhibit
30/05/09	Outside area near the Broad	Hot disposal BBQ's had been placed in a concrete bin setting light to the rubbish inside.
03/06/09	Colney Pavilion	Bag of hot charcoal from a barbecue put in bin which ignited contents.
22/06/09	Chancellors Drive	Vehicle fire.
23/06/09	BMRC corridor	Burnt out motor in fridge
05/10/09	Suffolk Terrace kitchen	Burnt food
28/10/09	Norfolk Terrace kitchen	Chip pan fire
25/11/09	Britten House kitchen	Food fire under grill
30/11/09	Britten House kitchen	Food fire in microwave
01/12/09	Constable Terrace kitchen	Kettle lead melted on hot hob.

#### 5.4 Reported false fire alarms

Frequent false fire alarms degrade fire safety as they lead to the assumption by building occupants that any alarms that sound are false. Consequently occupants can respond poorly, or not at all, to such alarms and thereby place themselves and others at risk in a real fire emergency.

<b>Calendar year</b>	<b>All buildings</b>	<b>Residential buildings</b>	<b>Non-residential buildings</b>	<b>No. attended by fire brigade</b>	<b>% attended by fire brigade</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>
2008	410	340	70	18	4
2007	397	310	87	63	16
2006	241	153	88	147	61
2005	215	136	79	135	62
2004	220	175	45	105	47

#### **Cause of false fire alarms in residences**

<b>Calendar year</b>	<b>Malicious</b>	<b>Steam from shower</b>	<b>Other eg cooking</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>168</b>
2008	54	137	149
2007	44	118	148
2006	32	10	111