

Workshops health and safety

Manager and Supervisor responsibilities

As a manager or supervisor, you have an important legal duty to ensure that persons under your control are able to work in a safe and healthy manner. This in turn helps the University to meet their obligations as an employer. Section 3 of the **University's Health, and Safety Policy** outlines your responsibilities. The **University's Code of Practice for Managing Health and Safety** covers arrangements you need to put in place to implement the Policy, such as consultation with employees, communication, competence and capability of employees. Both of these documents are available to download at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/health-safety/policies/hs-policy.aspx>

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provide useful resources related to workshops and hazardous substances typically used in these environments that you should refer to when creating or reviewing risk assessments and safe working procedures. These include: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/engineering/>, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/woodworking/> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>

- The HSE also offer specific publications for engineering and woodworking environments that cover supervisory roles and responsibilities, as well as the importance of everyone's competency. These can be downloaded at

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg129.pdf> and

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg440.pdf>.

- It is as important to ensure risks to health are controlled, just as much as for safety. Health hazards include noise, vibration and harmful substances, including wood dust and welding fumes. Ensure risk assessments take account of health hazards. You will find guidance on these areas on the University's health and safety website:

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/health-safety/>



Working safely in workshops

Safety precautions

- Always ensure equipment and tools are safe to use, fit for purpose and suitable for the task.
- If you suspect any item is unsafe, take it immediately out of service, so it cannot be used and report it to your supervisor.
- Before you start work, check the equipment and the work area. For example:
 - Are screens, guards, clamps, jigs, push sticks available and right for the equipment you are about to use?
 - Can you turn the equipment off quickly in an emergency, e.g. is there an emergency stop control in easy reach?
 - Are any modifications in line with manufacturer guidance?



Source: HSE image gallery

- Is the work area suitable for the size or shape of materials being worked on?
- Are there any housekeeping, slip or trip hazards from trailing cables, spills or uneven flooring?
- Do you know which Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to wear for which tasks and why?
- You must only use equipment and tools that you have been trained on and are authorised to use.
- Make sure you are familiar with the risk assessments and safe working procedures for the tasks you carry out. If there is a safer way of doing something, let the person responsible for the workshop know.

Protect your health and that of others

- Remember to think 'health' as well as 'safety'. Health hazards must be controlled. These include noise, vibration and harmful substances, including wood dust and welding fumes. For example, wood dust can cause asthma when breathed in and hardwood dust can cause nasal cancer.
- Where local exhaust ventilation systems are required, make sure they are switched on for the duration of the task and are working properly. Dust should go into the extraction unit, not your lungs.
- Check that all substances are in suitable containers that are accurately labelled and, when not in use, any hazardous substances are stored in appropriate bunded and fire resistant cabinets.
- If you have been provided with hearing, respiratory or eye protection or other PPE such as gloves for specific tasks, make sure you can correctly put it on, take it off and use it. Store it safely so that it does not become contaminated or damaged. Remember that PPE is the last means of protecting your health.

And finally... Do not become complacent about workshop hazards; there are plenty of real-life examples of people who have sustained significant, life changing injuries or ill health. Don't let that include you. If you are unsure of anything, stop work and contact your supervisor or their line manager.

Getting help

If you need help on workshop safety please contact the Health and Safety Advisory Service, email safety@essex.ac.uk, extn 2944.