

Health & Safety Code of Practice for Cleaners and Porters

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Introduction

This short guide is designed to help you keep safe at work and to help you to understand your personal legal obligations under the Health and safety at Work etc Act 1974.

You are asked to read it carefully and to follow what it says. If you wish, you can ask how to download a copy of the main University Code of Practice for Health & Safety, which is a much longer and more detailed document.

It is always important to remember that you should never hesitate to ask for advice, especially on safety matters.

What the Law Says

The University has an obligation to take reasonable care of your safety whilst you are work. However, as an employee, you also have a duty to take reasonable care of your own safety and a duty not to put other people at risk, by what you do or fail to do. The law also reminds you that you must cooperate with the University over matters of Health & Safety.

In addition, you must know that it is an offence to misuse or interfere with any safety equipment.

Emergency Arrangements

In case of emergency, the best way of getting help is by using the University telephone system and calling 4444. (If you work in the Medical School, the number is 2222).

The emergency number can be used to get help in case of Fire, if you require the Police or an Ambulance and for all other potentially life-threatening emergencies such as chemical spills or gas leaks.

Before you make the call, remember that the Emergency Control Centre will need to know the exact location of the incident, so make sure that you can tell them. Do not ring off until they tell you to do so.

What to do in Case of Fire

You must ensure that you memorise the fire procedure, which will be found on blue and white notices, for any building in which you work. It is much too late to start trying to work out what to do when you are faced with an emergency!

If you find a fire:

1. Raise the alarm
This will usually be by breaking the glass on a red alarm call-point. In very small buildings, you may need to shout "Fire".
2. Call the Fire Service
You can do this by calling the Emergency number (usually 4444) and giving details.
3. Tackle the Fire
This will normally be by leaving the room and closing the door to contain the fire. Only attempt to fight the fire if you can do so safely and have received training – always have a second person present.

If you Hear a Continuously-sounding Fire Alarm

(either a bell or electronic sounder)

1. Shut down any equipment if safe to do so. Don't leave trailing leads over walkways where someone could trip as they leave a building.
2. Leave the building by the *nearest* safe exit. This will often be a designated emergency exit and not necessarily the door which you usually use to enter and leave the building.
3. Do not use lifts – you may become trapped
4. Go to the Fire Evacuation Assembly point for your building and remain there until informed that it is safe to return.
5. If you believe anyone to be missing or trapped, make sure that you inform a Fire Office or a member of Safety Services immediately.

The Royal Hallamshire Hospital has a two-stage fire alarm. If you work in this building, make sure that you ask your supervisor to explain the system to you.

Some areas of the University (eg Firth Court and Alfred Denny buildings) have a sub-zoned fire system. You must not go past any illuminated sign saying “**FIRE – DO NOT ENTER**”, Whether or not a fire alarm is sounding.

Fire doors must be kept shut at all times and never wedged open.

Failure to evacuate in the event of a fire alarm sounding, may result in disciplinary action being taken against you.

What to do if Someone is Injured or Ill

If a serious accident happens, then the actions of the nearest person may be life-saving. Even if the accident is small, it is important to act correctly.

If a qualified First Aider or Appointed Persons is available, send for them quickly. The send for an ambulance, if you think one is needed, by using the Emergency number (usually 4444). You can find the names of the nearest first aid-trained personnel by looking inside the lid of any University first aid box. In addition you may be able to put into action the training which you will have received on an out-of-hours session.

Reporting Accidents

Don't forget that if anyone has an accident at work, even if their injuries are slight, it must be reported immediately on an accident report form, which must be sent to Safety Services within 24 hours of the accident. In addition, Safety Services must be telephoned immediately if either an injured person goes to hospital or they are off work for more than 3 days, as the result of a work accident.

Electrical Equipment

Inspect any electrical equipment before use. If you find any worn cables, loose or broken plugs or anything else seems to be wrong, do not use the equipment. Report it to your line manager for repair. Make sure you switch off power outlets before disconnecting and never drag on flexes. Do not, as far as possible, have trailing leads across passages. Remember also that water and electrical equipment is a lethal combination.

Floor Surfaces

A lot of University accidents happen as a result of people slipping and tripping. If it is part of your job to maintain floor surfaces, make sure that you use approved products and apply them correctly. Hazard warning signs must be put out to warn building users of wet or slippery floors. Ensure that floors are kept as dry as possible.

Above Floor Level

Never stand on chairs, stool, tables or boxes and be careful not to over-reach. If it is part of your job to use steps or ladders, make sure that they are in good condition and on a firm, stable base. Ladders must always be lashed or “footed” and not used at too steep an angle.

Lifting and Carrying

Nearly everyone will need to lift and carry as part of their job and it is important to do so correctly to avoid injury. Never attempt to lift something that you believe to be too heavy or too awkward. Always get assistance if you require it. In normal lifting, remember to keep your back straight but relaxed, using your leg muscles to do the work. Avoid undue haste, twisting and over-reaching. If you are employed to lift regularly, you should use gloves and the safety shoes which have been provided for you.

Use of Materials

Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions, which will be found on containers or data sheets, when you are using cleaning materials or household chemicals. Get advice from your line manager if you are not sure. You must not keep anything in unlabelled bottle or other containers. Apart from the risk of someone using the materials incorrectly, it is very costly to dispose of unidentified substances.

Never mix cleaning materials, especially lavatory cleaners, without the express permission of your line manager.

If cleaning materials, household chemicals or solvents come into contact with your skin, wash them off thoroughly with cold water. Wear gloves whenever you use such materials. If you splash something in your eye, wash it out quickly with plenty of water and seek advice from a first aider. If there is any irritation to your eye, you should attend the Eye Casualty Unit at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital for a check-up.

Laboratories and Workshops

Laboratories and Workshops can be very dangerous places. They contain hazardous chemical and other equipment. You must be careful not to touch anything and to obey safety signs displayed in the area.

In general, cleaning should be restricted to floors, waste-bins and clear bench tops. Waste bins should be tipped out rather than be emptied by hand.

If you find a spillage, do not assume that it is safe to mop up. Many nasty chemicals can look like water.

Always seek advice from a competent person in the department concerned if you are unsure about anything or need something moving.

Glass and Sharps

Most laboratory areas will have glass bins and these must be emptied by authorised people, wearing protective gloves, directly into an appropriate container for disposal. In office areas, broken glass or sharps should be placed next to the waste bin. It should then be wrapped carefully before placing it in the skip.

Normal waste bins should never contain glass or sharps but occasionally it may happen accidentally. Always carry black waste sacks away from your legs and body to prevent injury.

Protective Clothing and Footwear

Always wear any protective clothing, such as overalls, safety glasses or gloves if they have been provided for you. If your job is not one which requires safety shoes, try to wear well-fitting shoes with a good grip, covered toes and a broad heel for work.

Storage Areas

Keep storage areas clean tidy and free from rubbish. Apart from making it easier to find things, it reduces the risk of fire and other accidents. Corridors, staircases provide safe circulation areas and means of escape from a building. They must never be used for storage, however temporary. Take care not to obstruct fire exits, notices or fire-fighting equipment.

General Behaviour

Running, throwing and similar acts of "horseplay" are strictly prohibited. Even in an emergency it is safer to walk quickly than to run.

Conclusion

This guide has been produced to help you keep safe whilst you are at work. If you have any doubts or worries about safety matters, consult your line manager. If he/she is unable to help then you, as any other member of the University, may contact Safety Services for advice.

