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New Access Control Scheme

A proposal for a new colour coded access control system for room entry throughout the College has been submitted to Health and Safety Management Committee. This coding would be very simple to understand and will replace the current disparate systems utilised across the College.



There is currently no global standard for access control signage within the College. Current practice is heavily reliant on standard 'off-the-peg' safety signage of the 'no unauthorised entry' type, though in limited places there are rudimentary attempts at coding rooms in line with a single colour code to signify certain restrictions. This practice fails to provide an adequate system of control to the various high hazard, or secure, College areas as Facilities Management (in particular maintenance) and cleaners, for example, cannot easily interpret such signage so as to understand whether or not they have access to a particular door under routine or emergency circumstances.

The weaknesses in the current arrangements can be illustrated by two recent incidents:

- A cleaner was discovered inside a high containment microbiological facility despite signage on the door describing the area as 'Containment Level 3: No unauthorised entry'.
- A security officer provided access for building contractors out-of-hours into laboratories at the Hammersmith campus despite the rooms in question being outside the scope of works and signage being in place describing the labs as restricted access. This incident attracted the attention of the

Health and Safety Executive when the contractors subsequently contacted the agency through fear that they may have come into contact with something harmful.

These are not the only incidences of unauthorised access that have been reported to the Safety Department in recent years.

All rooms within the College will be classified into categories identified by a colour code roughly equating to the familiar 'traffic light' set up, though it is likely that there will be four colours rather than three: red, amber, yellow and green. Red areas will be those that are highly restricted to authorised staff and students at all times, even in the event of an emergency. Such areas will include biological Containment Level 3 laboratories—facilities that have existing written procedures in place in order to deal with emergencies. The restriction from the highest level at red will decrease through amber and yellow to green. The lowest classification, green, would apply to all areas within the College estate to which College members have access. A small sign with the correct colour coding will be placed on every door in the College.

The new system will fortify existing permit-to-work requirements and the procedures will be described fully within existing College guidance on access to restricted areas. The access coding for each area will also be incorporated into building floor plans within the Pythagoras space database.

The system has been agreed in principle with Building Managers and has been presented to a number of Departmental and Divisional Safety Officers. It is likely that a single building will be selected in the first instance to trial the scheme in advance of it being rolled-out College wide.

Managing Stress: Everyone's business

Melanie Phillips, Occupational Health Manager



We hear a lot about stress these days – in the newspapers, on TV and radio. Sometimes it can be difficult to define: what is stress exactly?

There is a difference between **stress** and **pressure**.

Pressure can be motivating: we all experience it on a daily basis, it motivates and enables us to perform at our best. However, stress can occur when pressure becomes excessive or long-term.

In the UK, 1 in 5 workers report feeling stressed at work: this equates to a total of approximately 5 million people. With this in mind, two new courses on Stress Management are being piloted by OH Services and the Staff Development Unit.

The first course, 'Keeping Cool Under Pressure', is designed for anyone who would like to improve their knowledge, insight and tools to understand and man-

age more effectively, personal potential or actual stress. This session is being run by John McConnel, an external trainer in stress management. The first one will be held on the **15th June 2007**.

'Stress: The Managers Role in Stress Reduction' is a seminar suitable for line managers. Line managers play an important intermediary role between individual staff members and the organisation, facilitating the effective management of stress in their teams. The seminar acknowledges that many managers will already have knowledge and skills in this area as many of the principles are really about good management. This is an opportunity to build on existing skills and knowledge. This is being run by Melanie Phillips; Occupational Health Manager at Imperial College and Vivienne Skinner; an independent consultant, trainer and coach with a wealth of experience on this topic. The first of these seminars will run on **12th July 2007**.

Bookings for both these events can be made in the usual way via the staff development web pages:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/staffdevelopment>

College goes smoke-free

Dr Alan Swann, Occupational Health Director



The College Non-smoking Policy is being changed to prohibit smoking in the few remaining College bars & catering outlets where smoking is allowed. Smoking will also be banned inside College vehicles and some semi-enclosed areas such as the Faculty Building bike store.

The changes will mainly affect the South Kensington, Silwood and Wye campuses. Medical campuses have been smoke-free since January 2006. Offices and other work areas throughout College have been effectively smoke-free for years.

The change in policy is necessary for College to comply with the Smoke Free Regulations that come into force on 1st July.

College also wants eliminate safety risks and nuisance from second hand smoke, so smoking will be banned in the vicinity of loading bays, gas stores and on the Sherfield and Library walkways. Research shows that non-smokers regularly exposed to second hand smoke have a 25% increased risk of lung cancer and heart disease.

Signs will be posted up at every building entrance and other smoke-free areas to alert everyone to the

new policy. Cigarette disposal bins will be moved away from building entrances.

A College-wide ban, prohibiting smoking anywhere on College campuses, may be introduced in 2008. To help smokers who want to use this opportunity to give up, the College Occupational Health Service is organising a smoking cessation group at South Kensington. The first meeting will be held on 6th July. Information on other help for those who would like to quit, including smoking cessation groups on other campuses is available on the OH Service's web pages.

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/occhealth/guidanceandadvice/stopsmokingsupportservices>

OH Department Update



Brian-John Alford joined the Occupational Health Department in May as our new Administrative Officer (IT) and will be the departmental contact for our health screening service.

Brian is also part of the team who is actively implementing the new healthcare database.

Contact details: 0207 594 9383/b.alford@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial College Health Centre

Dougie Mason, Audit and Information Officer

The Imperial College Health Centre at South Kensington is an NHS General Practice which provides some additional services to Imperial College. Staff and students based at South Kensington and who live in *the following postal districts* can register with the Centre for the full range of NHS GP services.

- SW 1,3,5,6,7,10
- W 1,2,6,8,9,10,11,14
- W12- College Hall only
- NW 1,3, 5, 8
- N 1,5,6,7
- WC 1, 2

Through an agreement with College, **only students** not eligible to register with the practice under the NHS can use the Health Centre's services during the day. However, they should still register with a GP close to where they live so they have access to NHS out-of-hours services or home visits if too unwell to travel.

The Health Centre is also able to provide a daytime **emergency** treatment service to staff not registered with the Centre for NHS services. This covers those who become acutely unwell at work, or who need treatment for a minor injury. This is available Monday-Friday, 08:00am - 18:00pm during term time; 08:00am - 17:00pm during vacations.

If you think you need help, you must first contact your local First Aider or a member of Security Staff (almost all Officers are trained first aiders) before going to the Health Centre. The First Aider will carry out an initial assessment and then contact the Health Centre, escorting you over, if necessary. They can also arrange for a doctor or nurse from the Health Centre to attend an emergency on campus if the person is too disabled to be taken over.

To contact the Health Centre for assistance phone IC ext: 49375/6. They are unable to provide a walk-in service.

If you are a member of staff who is not eligible for NHS registration at the Health Centre and you want to consult a doctor about a non-urgent medical issue while at work there are several NHS walk-in-clinics near to College where you do not require an appointment or need to be registered. These clinics are normally open from 7am-10pm, and can provide treatment and information for minor conditions, although they are not able to issue prescriptions. If follow-up is needed they will refer you to your usual GP. The nearest clinics to the main London campuses are shown below. Staff wanting to attend during normal working hours should seek their manager's agreement first.

- **Victoria NHS Walk-In Centre**
63 Buckingham Gate
London
SW1E 6AS
- **Parsons Green Walk-In Centre**
5-7 Parsons Green
London
SW6 4UL
- **Charing Cross NHS Walk-In Centre**
Charing Cross Hospital
Fulham Palace Road
London
W6 8RF

You can find full information on the Health Centre's NHS services and additional services for students at www.imperialcollegehealthcentre.co.uk

Manual Handling

Dr Alan Swann, Occupational Health Director



A College information leaflet on manual handling is now available for download from the Occupational Health web pages

The leaflet is designed to provide everyone with basic information on safe lifting and handling techniques. A survey of departments last year found that nearly all staff and students get involved in some manual handling at some time. Manual Handling injuries are the 3rd most commonly reported accident in College.

The leaflet is one part of a general revision of the College's Manual Handling Policy. The policy now stipulates that all staff and students must be given information about safe manual handling at induction. Anyone who will be regularly involved in manual handling tasks

must receive specific training.

The Policy also now requires line managers to identify and assess manual handling risks for all work under their control. Manual Handling Assessors will continue to play a vital role helping with complex risk assessments and basic training and helping Heads of Department meet their general responsibility for ensuring risks of injury are appropriately controlled.

The new policy, plus more detailed guidance on safe manual handling techniques are available via the Safety Department's web page.

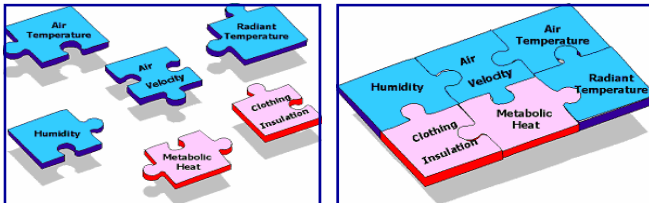
An update session for Manual Handling Assessors on the new Policy and new tools for risk assessments will be held on 14th June at South Kensington.

Thermal comfort: tips for keeping cool

Claire O'Brien, Senior Occupational Health Adviser

The summer appears to have arrived and as we are wilting in the Occupational Health Department's temporary accommodation we can really anticipate a summer of Thermal Discomfort!

Environmental temperature is only one of a number of factors which can contribute to the problem.



As individuals, we have varying tolerances to heat and cold. We need to monitor the temperature and instigate control measures to improve comfort and manage the problem.

The following measures may help individuals when the temperature increases:

- Placing insulating materials around hot plant and pipes
- Providing fans e.g. desk, pedestal or ceiling mounted
- Ensuring that windows are opened
- Using blinds and/or by reflective film on windows to reduce the heating effects of the sun
- Where possible, position workstations away from direct sunlight or other situations/objects that radiate heat (e.g. plant, machinery)

- Providing additional facilities, e.g. cold water dispensers (water is preferable to caffeine or carbonated drinks), introducing formal systems of work to limit exposure, e.g. flexible working patterns, job rotation, workstation rotation etc
- Allowing sufficient breaks to enable employees to get cold drinks or cool down
- Relaxing formal dress code – but you must ensure that personal protective equipment is provided and used if required

Pregnant Women, those who have an illness or disability, or are on medication are most likely to suffer as a result of the warm weather. Each case should be considered on an individual basis - managers can contact the Occupational Health Department for advice.

Outdoor workers should wear a long sleeved shirt with a collar and a wide brim hat for protection from the sun.

Sometimes, it's difficult to resist the temptation of sitting out during lunch breaks. If you do, apply SPF 8+ before exposure to the sun as it helps reduce the signs of premature ageing and prevents skin cancer.

Avoid dehydration: don't forget to carry a bottle of water on public transport, even if you are only going a few stops.

The last word may seem obvious but we need to be more particular about our personal hygiene routine as the temperature rises! Enjoy the summer.

(see also this edition's FAQ on page 7)

Care First: advice, information and counselling service

Care First is a counselling and advice service providing free help and information services 24/7 to Imperial College staff and their families. Calls to Care First are voluntary and confidential—you decide when and if you want to use the service and you make the call yourself, from wherever you like. You do not need to be referred and there is no feedback about individual consultations to College.

When you call Care First, your call will be answered by a fully qualified counsellor. All counsellors have experience in dealing with both workplace and personal issues. You can either discuss your concerns over the phone, or you can arrange an appointment with a counsellor close to your home or work, usually within 48 hours of requesting it. Telephone based support is also available to immediate family members who live with you.

Some of the typical issues presented are difficult situations at work, personal relationship problems, money/debt concerns, housing or caring for children, teenagers or elderly relatives. Counsellors can also provide information on legal issues.

A number of personal and work-related concerns can affect your health and wellbeing, including: relationships, family matters, loss or bereavement, money problems, pressure at work, work-load, bullying or harass-

ment. If not managed effectively, these can lead to anxiety, depression or difficulty with coping effectively. Many of us struggle without realising it or knowing what to do. Talking over your difficulties with a counsellor can help get things sorted.

A counsellor offers constructive support to help you clarify your situation and the impact it is having on your work and/or personal life. After exploring what you want to achieve, the counsellor helps you weigh up all the possible options and potential risks before you make any decisions. The approach in dealing with problems is non-judgemental.

Care First can also provide professional advice on a wide range of common personal and consumer issues. You can talk with a trained adviser over the phone, or simply ask for a leaflet. They produce a range of leaflets covering the following issues: dealing with debt, coping with a death, bereavement, childcare, alcohol and drug problems, caring for elderly relatives and family breakdown.



FREEPHONE: 0800 174319

are First
Employee Assistance Solutions

PROFILE...

Stefan Hoyle, Faculty Safety Manager, Faculty of Natural Sciences

Why did you chose a career in health and safety?

In some ways safety chose me! I was engaged in research work with a high-consequence respiratory pathogen which made me safety conscious even before I realised there was such a thing as an 'H&S career'. The research group I was working with then moved from one College campus to another and as part of the move I volunteered to co-ordinate the updating of risk assessments in the laboratory and became more involved with the procedures to be used in what was then a newly constructed biological containment laboratory. To my surprise I quite enjoyed it and ended up going on to study for the NEBOSH certificate course in occupational health and safety.

What qualifications do you hold?

I have a BSc (hons) in Biology with Biotechnology, MSc in Medical Microbiology, NEBOSH certificate and the NEBOSH Diploma (level 6).

What are more important in health and safety—qualifications or experience—and why?

I think experience. You can pass all the safety courses you like, but being able to effectively use the information you gain from a qualification depends on your own experiences. This tends to be very important as a lot of health and safety legislation is risk based and not prescriptive. Therefore, you have to be able to not only identify when someone needs to do a risk assessment but provide advice on what is appropriate and in some cases the best way to do the assessment. This helps the assessor in terms of ensuring they identify significant risks and shortens the time it takes them to do the assessment.

What is your 'pet subject' in health and safety?

In the laboratory, good housekeeping is important as it illustrates a degree of control and management responsibility as well as ensuring that the chances of contamination of the work and accidents to staff are reduced. Within a management context, trying to find the best channels for communicating health and safety information is always a challenge - there is no point in having great procedures if no-one knows about them.

What are the most significant hazards encountered in your Faculty?

We have work with pathogens, ionising radiation, hazardous chemicals and off site work. We also have a number of shared areas (cross Division and



Timeline.....

1997 ~ Completed BSc (hons) Biology with Biotechnology

1998 ~ Completed MSc Medical Microbiology

1999 ~ Joined Imperial College as research assistant

2002 ~ Completed NEBOSH certificate

2003 ~ Moved to Harefield Heart Science Centre as Laboratory and H&S Manager

2006 ~ Completed NEBOSH Diploma

2007 ~ Faculty of Natural Sciences Safety Manager

Faculty), so ensuring safety in these areas is managed effectively is very important.

Describe an average day in your job

As I am quite new to the post, a lot of my time at the moment is occupied by going round and meeting people and finding out what health and safety issues they have in their areas. Generally, there will be a number of e-mail requests for advice or help with assessments as well as visits to various laboratories and facilities. Documentation review and writing is never far away and can take up a considerable amount of time. Of course, all the best laid plans go out of the window when the call comes that there has been an accident or near miss that requires investigation.

Accidents

Rohini Gowtham, Accident Investigation Officer

Seeing the Light— Exposure to Ultraviolet

A recent accident within the College somewhat surprisingly demonstrated that very short exposures to UV light can be sufficient to cause photokeratitis (a burn of the cornea). This condition, commonly known as 'snowblindness' when caused by natural UVB light, can also be caused by artificial sources such as welder's arcs and transilluminators - the latter of which was the cause of the problem in this instance. Symptoms can include discomfort, redness, swelling and visual disturbances and often do not present themselves until 6-12 hours after exposure. Treatment typically consists of dressing the eye and applying an ophthalmic antibiotic and recovery usually takes place within several days — though this will depend upon the length of exposure.

In this particular accident, evidence suggests that exposure was no longer than 10-15 seconds. It occurred as a result of the person momentarily peering over the integral hinged shield. Fortunately, no lasting harm occurred and the person has now returned to work. It is therefore worth publicising the following points:

- Though the hinged shield is a common design feature of these instruments, it can be defeated by looking over the top or around the side of it and the ease by which this is achieved will depend upon the angle that the shield is positioned (the flatter the shield, the more protection it will offer). Suitable PPE in the form of face / eye protection should be considered in addition to the shielding.
- The positioning of the instruments on the laboratory bench should be given careful consideration since there is obviously scope for others working in the vicinity to be exposed either laterally or to the rear of the instrument when the shield is partially raised. Measures should be in place to exclude non-essential personnel.

Noise Surveys

Lets continue with the physical agents theme. Since exposure to excessive noise has the potential to cause harm, we have commenced a programme of noise surveys within the College. So far, this has been conducted on a request basis with those areas deemed likely to present noise problems that may exceed statutory action levels being given priority attention. The cases studied so far have included:

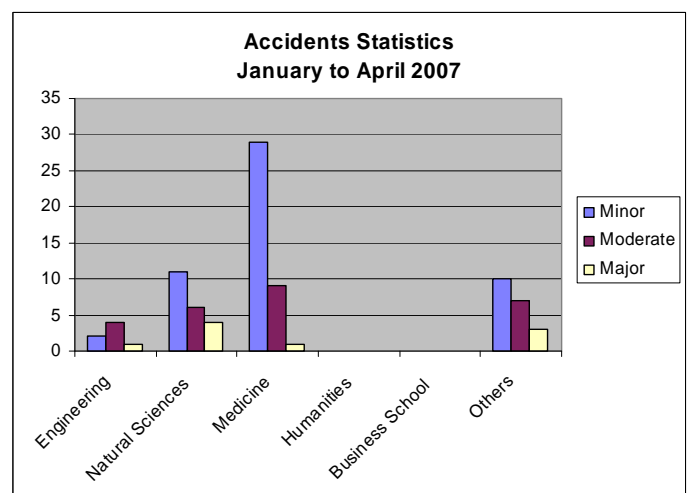
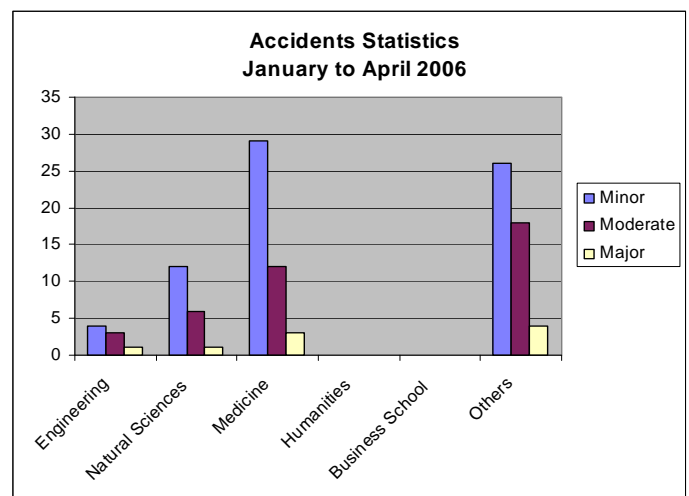
- Automated bottle wash stations. In one case, noise exceeded the 1st Action Level [80dB(A)] where ear protection was advised and in the second case, the 2nd Action Level [85dB(A)] was exceeded and it was concluded that some further personal dosimetry was required to gather more detailed information.
- Workshop milling machine and lathe. The 2nd Action Level [85dB(A)] was exceeded and a hearing protection zone established.

For further information, or to schedule a noise survey, please contact Rohini Gowtham: r.gowtham@imperial.ac.uk.

Accident Statistics

	Jan-April 2006	Jan-April 2007
Total accidents reported to the Safety Department	119	87
Total accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with RIDDOR 1995	1	4

Comparison Graphs January to April 2006 vs. 2007



Accident rating:

Minor: No treatment required / First Aid.

Moderate: Visit to Occupational Health / GP / Health Centre or A&E.

Major: HSE reportable / Lost time (up to 3 days) / member of public taken to hospital for treatment.

Frequently Asked Question:

What temperature does the workplace have to reach before I can go home?

Now that the summer is upon us again with ambient temperatures predicted to challenge record levels, workplace temperature becomes a topical subject and it is not unusual to receive enquiries phrased in the above fashion.

Regulation 7 of the *Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992* includes a statement that during working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be 'reasonable'. It also stipulates that thermometers shall be provided to enable those at work to determine the temperature within a workplace.

There is no maximum or minimum temperature stated in law (equating to when you can go home!) - it all depends on 'reasonable', as the regulations apply to **all** workplaces (it is not possible to have a frozen food warehouse operating above 0°C nor could you control a blast steel furnace down to 20°C).

The accompanying Approved Code of Practice to the Regulations giving authoritative advice, is as follows:

'The temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius unless much of the work involved severe physical effort in which case the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. These temperatures may not, however, ensure reasonable comfort, depending on other factors such as air movement and relative humidity'

'Where a reasonably comfortable temperature cannot be achieved throughout a workroom, local heating or cooling (as appropriate) should be provided. In extremely hot weather fans and increased ventilation may be used instead of local cooling'

'Where, despite the provision of local heating or cooling, workers are exposed to temperatures which do not give reasonable comfort, suitable protective clothing and rest facilities should be provided. Where practical there should be systems of work to ensure that the length of time for which individual workers are exposed to uncomfortable temperatures is limited'

Thus, if the temperature in the workplace is such that it is affecting the worker **and** it is due to the work process then steps should be taken to make it comfortable or to devise a safe system of work; if it is due to very warm weather then you can use additional fans, shade windows etc. Provision of cold drinking water, relaxing dress code where appropriate and introduction of flexible working hours are other measures to be considered. More information may be found on the HSE 'Temperature' home page:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm>

Safety Department Update

Draft Manual Handling Policy

The new draft Manual Handling Policy is now accessible on the Safety Department website:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/policies/individualpolicies/manualhandling>

Nanotechnology

A nanotechnology safety page with links to various external sites of interest has now been uploaded onto the website:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/guidanceandadvice/nanotechnology>

Laser Safety

A new laser safety page is now available that includes links to the College Laser Policy, an internal laser safety training presentation, relevant British Standards and AURPO guidance:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/guidanceandadvice/lasersafety>

Off Site Working—Code of Conduct

A short Code of Conduct for staff and students engaged in off site work has now been added as an appendix to the Off Site Working Policy. This outlines the standard of conduct and behaviour expected of College representatives when they are away on College business.

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/policies/individualpolicies/offsiteworking>

SHRUG

A SHRUG (Safety, Health and Radiation Users Group) page now exists on the website—this contains *Powerpoint* presentations and handouts from recent SHRUG meetings.

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/training/shrug>

Rectors Award for Health and Safety 2007



Congratulations to Prupti Malde, Departmental Operations Co-ordinator and Safety Officer for the Department of Oncology (SORA) who became the £2000 prize winner of the 2007 Rector's Award for Health and Safety. Prupti received the award from the Rector at this years ceremony held on the 23rd. March.

The two £500 commendation prizes were combined and awarded to Dennis Murphy, Dave Sammons, and Gary Scrace from Support Services and Heather Phillips of the Reactor Centre for the establishment of a safe system of work at the Silwood Park Campus.

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If you have any comments or suggestions for inclusion in future Newsletters please contact the editors:

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Occupational Health
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or

John Luke
Safety Department
j.luke@imperial.ac.uk

Training

Christine Wright, Assistant Safety Director

After the Event

After participation in a safety and health education and training event, whether lasting a couple of hours or the 13 days required in preparation for the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) Certificate examination, the following matters should be considered:

- Are participants aware of what is required of them?
- Do they now have the knowledge and skills needed to work safely and without risk to their own health and to that of others?
- Are participants actually working to the College's protocols?
- Has there been any improvement in the College's health and safety performance resulting from the training of individuals?

- What is the feedback from those who have been trained and their line managers or does the event slip into a black hole?
- Is further information and/or training needed?
- Was the most appropriate training method used for the relevant topics?
- What improvements might be made based on informal and formal appraisals?
- Has there been a change in improved behaviour and practice?
- Was it made clear that refresher/ requalification, as relevant, is provided?
- Is the training database being kept up-to-date?

In summary, quality safety and health education and training should make a difference in the workplace.

Images from a recent First Aid training session.....
students demonstrate their technique.....and their injuries!



Training Schedule & Events

Below is a selection of forthcoming courses. The complete list for this term is too comprehensive to include here—please consult the training programme link for the entire range:

<https://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/training/coursesindex.htm>

June 2007

Biological Safety Foundation Course (SK)	12th
DSE and Manual Handling Assessors Update (SK) <i>Occupational Health</i>	14th
Introduction to Laser Safety (SK)	27th
Computer health and Safety for Users and Assessors (SK) <i>Occupational Health</i>	28th

July 2007

Gas Safety: Cryogenic Decanting and Connecting Regulators (SK)	4th
CIEH Level 2 Award (SK)	5th
Safety Induction for New Starters (SK)	9th
First Aid Co-ordinators Update (SK) <i>with Occupational Health</i>	10th
First Aid Lifesavers (SK)	12th