

# THE FE COLLEGE LEADER



## ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES AT RISK FROM HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES?

Greg Boole, engineering inspection development manager at RSA, looks at the risks associated with failure to comply with tough regulations around the control of hazardous substances.

Failure to protect employees from exposure to hazardous substances can have serious consequences. Quite apart from the potentially serious effects on the health of employees, it can lead to heavy fines as well as longer-term impacts, such as damage to a college's reputation as an employer.

Managing these risks is not just about best practice. It is a legal requirement to protect employees from exposure to hazardous substances — and a series of recent prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) illustrates that it is willing to prosecute organisations that fail to comply.

In 2014, a school was fined £100,000 when a worker employed as a stonemason developed silicosis, a potentially fatal lung disease, which is caused by inhaling silica dust\*. The 55-year-old was employed by the school for 12 years, initially to carry out repairs for wind and weather-proofing, but also, with two other stonemasons, to help in the construction of a new four-storey sixth-form building.

An investigation by the HSE revealed that the stonemasons may have been exposed to more than 80 times the daily limit for silica dust. The school failed to take any measures to monitor or reduce the workers' exposure, despite sandstone consisting of 70%-90% crystalline silica.

The school was notified in July 2011 that one of the stonemasons had developed silicosis, but it still failed to take any action to monitor exposure and the two remaining stonemasons were made redundant in November 2011.

*Continued overleaf...*



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Welcome to this edition of *The FE College Leader*. As ever, we explore a series of topical issues, that we hope offer an interesting and practical commentary on each.

In particular, I would like to draw your attention to our lead article. Contributed by RSA, it looks at the risks associated with exposure to hazardous substances, and what can happen when colleges fail in their legal duty to protect members of staff.

You will also find articles assessing the likely flood impact of the predicted poor winter weather and the potential costs to the college of an unhealthy workforce.

Finally, the turn of the year often signals the end of long-term insurance arrangements, so let me give you a few good reasons to take a fresh look at Marsh:

- A free risk management assessment and access to a risk management bursary of £1,000.
- A curriculum policy that includes £10,000 worth of crisis communications support.
- Faster, simpler, and more efficient claims-handling – losses up to £2,500 settled within 24 hours of receipt of claim documentation.

If you would like to discuss your insurance arrangements, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our FE College team on 01444 313175 or [further.education@marsh.com](mailto:further.education@marsh.com).

In the meantime, allow me to wish you a prosperous New Year.

The worker with silicosis has suffered serious and irreversible health effects, including reduced lung function and breathlessness.

In a separate prosecution, High Peak Remedial Services Ltd\*\*, a property maintenance firm in Dukinfield, was prosecuted by the HSE after it failed to comply with an enforcement notice requiring its wood dust local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system to be thoroughly examined and tested. The inhalation of wood dust can cause serious health problems, including nasal cancer.

During a routine visit, a HSE inspector imposed an Improvement Notice on the company, requiring it to comply with the law and have its LEV system checked. The firm failed to comply, neither with the notice nor a subsequent extension, and was fined £8,000 with costs of £1,662.

In a further case, a director of a London masonry company was handed a suspended prison sentence for exposing workers to harmful stone dust and ignoring notices to improve the site's LEV. The HSE investigation found that workers at Redmist International Ltd\*\*\* were exposed to dusts that could cause asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, silicosis and even cancer.

The message here is clear. With an increasing risk of prosecution and the confirmation that the HSE's "Fee for Intervention" (FFI) charging scheme is here to stay, now is the time to review your procedures, ensure your LEV is working properly, and keep your employees safe.

### Hazardous Substances: Know the Law

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, employers must carry out a risk assessment and then implement measures to prevent, or adequately control, the exposure of their employees to hazardous substances. One such control measure is LEV, and the regulations require it to be thoroughly examined and tested by a "competent person" at regular intervals, usually every 14 months. The HSE defines LEV as "a ventilation system that takes dusts, mists, gases, vapours, or fumes out of the air so that they can't be breathed in". Examples in a college would include fume cupboards and extraction equipment on woodworking machines, metalworking machines, and in maintenance workshops.

Further information can be found at:

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

Institute of Occupational Health and Safety — [www.iosh.co.uk](http://www.iosh.co.uk)

For more information on health and safety related matters, and any advice and guidance on all aspects of engineering inspection, you can contact Greg Boole by email at [Greg.Boole@uk.rsagroup.com](mailto:Greg.Boole@uk.rsagroup.com).

Sources:

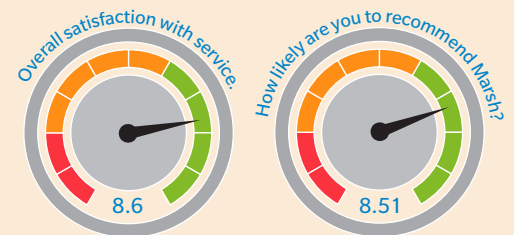
\* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-lancashire-27624837>

\*\* <http://press.hse.gov.uk/2014-4271/>

\*\*\* <http://www.iosh.co.uk/News/Workers-exposed-to-hazard.aspx>

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Marsh's Education Practice Client Satisfaction Results 2014\*\*



## HOW MUCH IS AN UNHEALTHY WORKFORCE COSTING YOUR COLLEGE?

Sick leave and working while unwell costs companies, on average, 7.78% of their yearly wage bill, according to the 2014 *Britain's Healthiest Company* report, the biggest study of employee health and wellbeing in the UK\*.

What's more, the study found that nearly two thirds (62%) of respondents had at least two bad lifestyle habits that put them at serious risk of future ill-health and, with that, future absence from work.

These are worrying statistics — illness, injury, and stress do not discriminate on the basis of seniority and losing key members of staff for long periods is likely to be particularly serious. Therefore, looking after the well-being of those key staff members such as the principal or finance director, and protecting the college against costs related to staff absence, should form part of a college's risk management and continuity planning.

As it happens, doing just that is surprisingly straightforward thanks to two specialist insurance covers available from Marsh:

- The key staff private medical insurance scheme can be operated for as few as three members of staff, and offers the rapid access to specialist care required to get key members of staff back to health, and back to work, quickly.
- Staff absence insurance provides a safeguard against the substantial costs that can be incurred in engaging supply teachers during the absence of regular staff.

To discuss how Marsh can assist you in the management of your staff absence costs, call 01444 313174 today.

Sources: \*[www.britainshealthiestcompany.co.uk/media/sunday\\_telegraph\\_bhc.pdf](http://www.britainshealthiestcompany.co.uk/media/sunday_telegraph_bhc.pdf)

\*\*Marsh's Education Practice Client Satisfaction Survey 2014 – total number of respondents 226.

## STORM WARNINGS: THERE MAY BE TROUBLE AHEAD

Recent advice from the Met Office suggests now might be a good time to start thinking about potential flood risks facing your college — from assessing the risk to putting in place business continuity plans to help you cope if the worst should happen.

According to the Met Office's three-month outlook there is a 25%-30% probability that the UK will see "well-above-average" rainfall of 430mm or more, this winter. Overall, the forecast warns of an increased risk of unsettled and wet weather into the New Year.

Clearly, such a prolonged period of wet weather would significantly heighten the risk of flooding. Given the impact a flood can have on a college, it is worth ensuring you are fully prepared, just in case.

In essence, the steps you can take now break down across three broad areas — awareness, resistance, and resilience.

### **Flood Awareness: Understand the Risks**

First, it is important to understand the extent to which your property is at risk from flooding. Start by visiting online postcode search tools provided by the Environment Agency (EA — England and Wales) to see if your local area is at risk.

It is also worth finding out what flood prevention schemes are available or are planned in your area, familiarising yourself with the flood warning schemes available from the EA, and signing up to Flood Warnings Direct from the EA to receive warnings by phone, text, or email.

### **Flood Resistance: Keeping Flood Waters Out**

If you discover that your college buildings are subject to a flood risk, the next step is to work out what you can do to protect yourselves if flood waters start to threaten.

For instance, consider installing flood barriers and defences over doors and other openings where water can get in — and make sure the college has access to emergency protection, such as sandbags.

Similarly, it may be worth investing in air brick covers, which can be fitted to prevent water entering the property and then removed when flood waters have receded, or fitting non-return valves to drainage systems to prevent water backing-up into the property.

### **Flood Resilience: Reduce the Impact of a Flood**

Unfortunately, some colleges will find themselves at serious risk of flooding. In these cases, the focus should be on mitigating damage when water gets in, alongside efforts to keep the water out.

There is no substitute for specialist advice, but precautions are likely to include raising electrical sockets, fuse boxes, controls, and wiring above likely flood levels and relocating vulnerable items to upper floors.

*For further flood guidance visit:*

[www.fhc-environment-agency.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.fhc-environment-agency.metoffice.gov.uk) / [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) / [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) / [uk.marsh.com/education](http://uk.marsh.com/education) / [www.ecclesiastical.com/educationhub](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/educationhub) / or join the Marsh UK Education Forum on LinkedIn®.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**HSE Charging Scheme to Stay** — An independent report has concluded that the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) "Fee for Intervention" (FFI) charging scheme is effective and should stay. FFI came into force on 1 October 2012 and allows the HSE to charge organisations £124 per hour when it provides an intervention (for example inspection, investigation, report, or enforcement action) in relation to a material breach of legislation. The aim was to shift the cost of regulating workplace health and safety from the public purse to organisations that break the law.

According to Judith Hackitt, Chair of HSE, said: "Both HSE and the Government believe it is right that those who fail to meet their legal health and safety obligations should pay our costs, and acceptance of this principle is growing. This review gives us confidence that FFI is working effectively and should be retained".

### **Is Your College Prepared for Winter?**

Minimising winter risks is about effective planning and regular inspection — from checking drainpipes to ensuring water tanks are properly lagged — preparation can help to mitigate winter weather impacts on operations and business continuity. However, winter risks are not limited to those affecting the college buildings. Winter conditions, including ice and snow, increase the likelihood of accidents — so make a plan for dealing with pathways, car parks, and entrances, which could become hazardous in winter. Further practical guidance can be found at [uk.marsh.com](http://uk.marsh.com)

**Have You Linked In®?** Thank you to everyone who has joined Marsh UK Education Forum on LinkedIn®. The response from all those who have joined has been really positive and topics such as crisis communications, Ebola preparedness, and cyber risks have already been covered. The more of you that get involved, the more useful it will be. So visit [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) to join today.



## GREG BOOLE ENGINEERING INSPECTION DEVELOPMENT MANAGER — RSA ENGINEERING INSPECTION CONSULTANCY



### *Where were you born?*

I was born and raised in Great Barr, Birmingham.

### *Where did you study?*

I studied at Great Barr Comprehensive School where I was

very interested in technical drawing, metalwork, and woodwork. This was due to my father being an engineer and teaching me to work with my hands.

### *What was your first job?*

I started work in the accounts department at Royal Insurance.

### *How did you become involved in the education sector?*

Essentially, through my current role with RSA, and by working closely with Marsh to provide engineering inspection services as part of its Education Practice's offering.

### *What is your role within RSA?*

As engineering inspection development manager, I am responsible for procuring new inspection contracts via my panel of insurance brokers.

### *Tell us about the role thermography techniques can play in fire prevention?*

RSA has pioneered the use of thermography and has recently introduced a thermographic risk assessment service.

Using thermal imaging is an extremely effective way to reduce or prevent fire risk when looking at the key components of the fixed electrical wiring system within a building — an important focus given that 30%-40% of major fires in UK commercial buildings can be attributed to electrical faults.

Our engineers interpret the images and data we produce to identify electrical hotspots and faults that would not normally be detected using conventional methods of testing and inspection.

Once the survey is complete and we have made recommendations as to what action is needed, we usually find that we also have the ability to recommend a future risk-based approach. This can reduce the overall cost incurred by the building owner (by recommending future inspections based on risk) and can also reduce future capital expenditure by avoiding complete re-wires.

### *If you could convince colleges to do one thing differently, what would it be?*

Take advantage of RSA's thermographic risk assessments — for a very small cost, the benefits are enormous.

The electrical system is a critical component to any college. If a main electrical component fails then a college could be completely shut down or, worse, a fire could cause significant damage to the property and coursework contained within.

### *What is the best bit of professional advice you've ever been given?*

Treat everyone in the manner that you would want to be treated yourself.

### *What book are you currently reading?*

*The Climb* — the autobiography of Chris Froome.

### *Favourite film?*

*Convoy*.

### *First ever car?*

An Austin Allegro. I wasn't lucky enough to have the square steering wheel though, but mine did have twin headlights!

### *Your preferred weekend getaway destination?*

The Lake District.

## For further information, please contact:

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