

Health and Safety Annual Report 2011

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Appendix 1 – Health and Safety Performance

- Total number of accidents and incidents including near miss reports
- RIDDOR Reportable Accidents
- Comparison accident rates against sector average (USHA)
- Performance against targets set in the Health and Safety Strategy

Appendix 2 – Fire Alarm Performance

1. Executive Summary

This report covers the period from 01 January – 31 December 2011 inclusive, and reviews progress against 2011's strategic health and safety priorities. It also includes important data that evidences our current health and safety performance, and articulates the key priorities for 2012.

In 2011 we initiated a different approach to reducing accidents in the workplace and developing an even safer environment for our staff, students and Campus visitors, engaging staff and students in health and safety issues, rather than policing their efforts. We are at the beginning of this change in approach; however, there is some evidence that we are making progress, and the new focus has been embraced by both the Health and Safety team and colleagues across the University. We have used the services of a change management consultant with expertise in the health and safety sector to inform our strategy.

In terms of the accident data the total number of non-reportable accidents, whilst still high, shows sustained reduction from its peak of a 154 in 2009 to 97 in 2011, although those reported by staff remained broadly static. One of our priorities for 2012 will continue to be to significantly reduce the number of accidents, whilst also recognising that we need to ensure that staff, students and visitors are encouraged to report accidents. It is a balancing act from a communications perspective. Reportable accidents (RIDDOR) decreased from a peak of six in 2009 and 2010 to a new low of two in 2011. The introduction of fire safety awareness for students during 2011 in addition to the mandatory training for staff has significantly increased fire safety awareness across the University.

Overall, although there has been improvement in some areas of health and safety performance, there remains considerable scope and opportunity for continuing improvement across the service and the University as a whole. This is being addressed through a wider re-profiling and change programme of health and safety, led by the central Health and Safety team.

2. Key achievements during the year

In the context of the new cross-University focus, we have continued to improve internal safety systems and compliance with regulatory requirements. Initiatives and developments undertaken in 2011 include:

- a) The review of how biological safety is managed at both department and University level for Biological¹ work, resulting in the establishment by the Health and Safety Committee of a new Biological Safety Sub-Committee and the appointment of a University Biological Safety Officer.
- b) The production of a document on 'Health and Safety Responsibilities for Managers and Supervisors', endorsed by the University Executive, which provides specific guidance on the health and safety aspects of roles involving managerial and supervisory duties at Aston.
- c) A refreshed Policy and Guidance on Display Screen Equipment (DSE) now strengthened with a greater emphasis on nominated staff members within Schools and Departments being trained as DSE assessors.

¹ Guiding legislation to which this work applies is The Biological Agents and Genetically Modified Organism Regulations 2010

- d) The development and delivery of a DSE assessor workshop in response to (c) above.
- e) The development and trial of a Safety Incentive Scheme. Three University support departments - Conference Aston, Catering@aston and Cleaning Services - participated in the scheme, the aim of which was to reduce the accident rate by increasing safety awareness within the areas concerned, and to increase staff engagement with health and safety. It allowed managers to recognise and reward safety performance.
- f) The provision of Fire Safety Awareness training, via e-learning, for students. Previously it was undertaken in a face-face teaching format by West Midlands Fire Service.
- g) Improving signage in 'high risk' areas. Work was undertaken to identify areas around the University which are potentially high-risk.
- h) The development and implementation of a new Fire Warden Scheme within the Library.
- i) Continuing health and safety policy review.
- j) An agreed Health and Safety Audit Strategy for the next five years, and the appointment of a new Audit Group Chair, Dr Malcolm Booth.
- k) Monitoring changes in external legislation and, where appropriate, ensuring its implementation.

3. Enhancing Aston's Health and Safety Performance through Culture Change

In last year's Health and Safety Annual report, we highlighted that Aston was experiencing avoidable accident rates higher than sector average. Both the Executive Team and the University's Council expressed concern at the level of accidents in both absolute and percentage terms, and agreed that a significant improvement was required. Accidents caused by slips, trips and falls on the same level, or by handling, lifting and carrying should only happen very rarely if safe working practice and procedures are followed and reasonable precaution is taken.

We therefore targeted ourselves with a 20% reduction in avoidable accidents by the end of 2012 through an approach of changing culture, and deeply embedding an appropriate attitude and focus to health and safety across the University. The new programme included the following key points:

- setting aggressive targets for the reduction of staff accidents
- moving from administration, reporting and audit to engaging "hearts and minds"
- high visibility safety campaigns
- increasing awareness of health and safety requirements for staff and identifying innovative ways of checking understanding and closing information gaps
- evaluating the delivery and effective communication of safety training through on line methods
- refreshing the staff safety awareness induction programme
- improving health and safety signage in high risk areas
- prioritising training of staff for those areas with the highest incidence of accidents
- increasing awareness of manual handling techniques for all staff in an innovative way

- reviewing and updating the Health and Safety policies at University and School/departmental level
- working with the student population to both raise awareness of health and safety and encourage reporting of accidents (when appropriate).

We are very much at the beginning of this change in direction; however, we are starting to see both the result of our work through a reduction in avoidable accidents, and an increased number of examples of 'best practice' across the University, of which we share a few below.

Conference Aston and Catering@Aston implemented a high visibility safety awareness campaign achieving 87 consecutive days without an accident.

The School of Life and Health Sciences introduced a policy on the ordering and delivery of bulky items to reduce accidents caused through lifting.

The Library has organised manual handling training specific to its needs.

LSS send regular H&S updates via email to staff, and have seen a reduction in the number of accidents. H&S display boards are placed prominently with information directed at staff and students.

All University cleaning staff undertook mandatory training with the British Institute of Cleaning Science. The training included working safely with chemicals and machinery, and the correct use of warning signs.

Safety has been the key driver in the design/commissioning of the new EAS laboratories, by removing or reducing inherent risks with the installation of gas/fire monitoring systems which shut down services in an emergency.

ISO 14001 accreditation commending Conference Aston for the safe management and disposal of waste.

The Library implemented an out of hours fire warden scheme.

All sports clubs and societies regularly participating in matches and field trips are encouraged to undertake first aid training. Sabbatical and Executive Officers have undertaken training in preparedness for Freshers' week.

Joint collaboration between Finance, The Hub and Estates in the design, planning and development of the new Finance zone that integrated and resolved safety issues associated with cash security requirements and staff and student facilities and administration.

Re-accreditation of the Universities UK Management of Student Residential Accommodation – commended on information issued to students including Health and Safety issues.

The fire warden introduced in CEAC has increased fire safety awareness and reduced evacuation times.

A Health and Safety Matters message uploaded onto the QR Codes located around the residences for students to access via smart phones and in addition the text messages sent all students with mobile numbers in residences.

Estates have implemented a new initiative in assisting departments to carry out their own safety inductions and issue contractor permits with contractors employed locally.

The implementation of an emergency evacuation procedure within HR, in particular the use of a fire safety register.

4. Health and Safety Training

In 2009 a health and safety training matrix was introduced to assist Schools and departments with identifying their essential health and safety training needs in areas such as first aid provision, fire safety, manual handling and computer work.

Training and awareness raising remains a key priority. Our focus in 2012 is to:

1. make the training timely, relevant and delivered in an appropriate way
2. review and identify University-wide core health and safety training needs and develop a core training programme
3. ensure 100% completion of the fire safety awareness for students and new staff and refresher training for existing staff (all on-line)
4. increase the number of staff who have manual handling training
5. ensure that all Schools/departments have sufficient staff trained in risk assessments, basic first aid and basic health and safety.

In particular, priority training identified for 2012 includes:

- Recognising and managing symptoms of stress for managers
- IOSH Managing Safely
- NEBOSH for operations managers
- Fire Marshall training
- Basic First Aid Training
- Manual handling
- Working with ladders/working at height

5. Radiological/Biological safety

Radiological matters

In January 2011 the University was visited by the Environment Agency. Although two minor instances of non-compliance were identified, implementation of a number of wide-ranging actions resolved these issues to the full satisfaction of the Inspector.

Following advice from the University Radiation Protection Advisers and the Occupational Health Adviser, agreement was reached to discontinue pre-employment medicals for prospective radiation workers.

Biological matters

2011 saw the appointment of the University Biological Safety Officer and the establishment of the Biological Safety Sub-Committee (BSS-C). Their main function is to obtain or provide professional/expert advice to the University and Schools on matters relating to Biological Safety (for example, work involving Genetic Modification, pathogens and micro-organisms etc).

The BSS-C held its inaugural meeting in September 2011 and addressed a number of key issues (e.g., overseeing both the implementation of a standardised form and the approval of work involving Genetically Modified Organisms). The Committee has identified training as one of its key 2012 objectives.

6. Fire Safety Performance

The Safety Office continued to raise the profile of fire safety awareness during 2011 with the continuation of mandatory fire safety awareness training for all staff and students and with the review of fire risk assessments.

Student fire safety awareness has now been rolled out in e-learning format. 2,660 students completed the fire safety awareness training, and the Safety Office and Schools have set in train more effective communication to improve the completion rate in 2012.

We will be delivering staff fire safety awareness training in e-learning format from the end of March 2012.

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS)

Site Risk Surveys by WMFS enable the fire service to plan for the circumstances that they may face when attending a fire incident on site. We have a strong collaborative approach.

The WMFS has undertaken a number of routine Enforcement Inspections under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) and action plans have been developed to address those deficiencies identified.

As a result of these inspections a number of minor deficiencies have been highlighted. Estates & Capital Development Department and the Safety Office are collaborating with WMFS on developing and implementing action plans to address the issues highlighted.

Main Building & Wings fire improvements

Following discussions with WMFS, Building Control, Estates and Capital Development and the Safety Office, we have developed a 10 year plan to improve the Main Building's performance should an outbreak of fire occur.

A team of architects and fire engineers were chosen to undertake a full assessment of the Main Building & Wings. The assessment comprised the following:

- a) an intrusive survey of the building structure, which included boring holes into fire compartment walls to sample their composition
- b) an occupancy study to identify the numbers of people that occupy the building at peak times
- c) a review of the provision of the escape routes to ensure that there is a suitable means of escape provision for the maximum number of occupants within the building.

Some shortfalls were found in the provision of escape routes which will be rectified during the early part of 2012. We will be upgrading our fire compartmentation to prevent the spread of smoke and flames and upgrading the fire alarm system.

Fire Risk Assessments

During 2011, the first of the fire risk assessments reviews, highlighting fire safety hazards, were conducted. The buildings assessed included:

Aston Brain Centre and the Day Hospital
Boiler House
Day Nursery
Vision Sciences
Woodcock and Gem Sports Centres
Library
Aston Business School

Each review resulted in the overall view that fire safety standards could be improved. In some cases, deficiencies were identified with PAT testing arrangements, improper storage of combustible materials and inadequate housekeeping arrangements. Integrity of fire doors was also highlighted, as was deficiencies in signage. Whilst disappointing, all of the issues identified could be rectified with little investment.

Fire Warden Scheme

During the latter part of 2009, a Fire Warden Scheme was piloted within the Chemical Engineering Building. The aim of the scheme was to reduce emergency evacuation time, and provide assistance to the Security Team.

The pilot scheme proved a success and we are in the process of rolling the Scheme out across the Campus.

Safe Refuges and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP)

The Fire Safety Adviser has been working closely with the Disability and Additional Needs Unit (DANU) and with Estates & Capital Development to provide safe refuges for disabled people during emergency evacuation. A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) has been produced for all students and staff who require assistance during an emergency evacuation.

Estates and Capital Development are continuing with their five year rolling plan to review all campus buildings and install fire protected refuge points, with fully compliant British Standard (BS) refuge communications devices where appropriate.

Deliberate Fires

There was one incident during 2011. This was in the external car park of the Students' Guild.

7. Health and Safety Legislation and Guidance

In 2011 Professor Ragnar E Löftsted of Kings College, supported by an independent panel, was tasked with carrying out an independent review of all health and safety legislation, with a view to consolidating, simplifying or revoking regulations. From 6th April 2012, subject to Parliamentary approval, RIDDOR's injury reporting requirement will change from over three days' to over seven days' incapacitation. Employers will, however, still be required to keep a record of all 'over three day' injuries.

This and a range of health, safety and environmental advice can be found on 'Barbour index' an online health and safety service to which the University subscribes. All committee members have access to the service. The site provides up to date information on legislation, regulations and standards.

In May 2011, the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) in association with the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) published the document 'Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork'. The document provides an outline of management practices that will help to protect both staff and students, and the health and safety issues to be considered before, during and after fieldwork, including offsite visits and travel.

8. Security and Emergency Management Planning

- (1) The University has, since June 2009, been operating an institutional Emergency Management Plan (EMP).

The EMP, which deals principally with the University's response to the initial stages of an emergency, was formulated in accordance with a Good Practice Guide, 'Planning for and Managing Emergencies' - published for universities by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), in conjunction with the Association of University Chief Security Officers.

During 2011, a fourth training session was held for the Executive and other senior academic and administrative officers in the University's procedures for handling emergencies. This session, like the three conducted in earlier years, focused on a 'mock' emergency incident, designed to enhance management awareness and to test responses, as well as identifying in the process suggestions for improving procedures associated with the EMP. The weekly rota whereby each of these colleagues act, in turn, as a 'duty' Emergency Incident Manager (EIM), has now been operating successfully for over two years. The EIM is contacted by Aston University Security either in the event of an incident arising outside normal working hours or when the person with routine management responsibility for the area of activity concerned is not readily available. A summary of the incidents which required attention in 2011 is given below:

Summary of incidents in 2011

Date:	EIM on duty at time of incident:	Incident:
Friday, 7 th January 2011	Jane Filby	Fire alarms system fault. Residences were evacuated to the ABS Building.
Friday, 23 rd April 2011	Professor Helen Griffiths	Security understaffed due to sickness therefore main Building closed to new entrants unless for special cases.
Monday, 18 th July 2011	Professor David Lowe	A fire occurred in the 6 th Floor E-Corner Plant Room which also affected the 5 th floor E-Corner Plant Room. Incident led to the main building being evacuated for three hours.
Friday, 22 nd July 2011	Professor John Edwards	Road traffic accident, car crashed through hording into BAM construction site.
Monday, 25 th July 2011	Professor John Edwards	Student related incident on University campus.
Wednesday, 27 th July 2011	Professor John Edwards	Fluorine leak in the University Day Hospital. Fire service called to the scene.
Tuesday, 9 th August and Wednesday, 10 th August 2011	Professor Martin Griffin/Alastair Hewgill	Security concerns arising from disturbances in city centre resulting in University closure.
Tuesday, 29 th November 2011	Alan Hawkesworth	One of the high level composite resin panels became detached from the James Watt residences tower and hit the ground outside the MLK Centre.

(2) With effect from 1st January 2012, the University's management of emergency incidents has been further enhanced - both within, and outside of, office hours, as follows:

a) Within office hours

- regular staff and student communications to be sent, reminding all of the need to evacuate quickly and attend the appropriate assembly points (and remain there)
- the Chief Financial Officer, Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Director of Capital Development and Head of Security to form a Command and Control Group. This group will attend the Security area when an evacuation commences, and agree who will stay with the Security team (decision making/ communication) and who will rotate around the assembly points and provide verbal updates
- updates, by means of loud speakers, to be provided every fifteen minutes
- communications explaining the cause of an evacuation and any issues arising therefrom to be emailed to all staff and to all students as soon as possible following re-entry to the evacuated building(s).

b) Out of hours

- the number of senior managers who fulfil the EIM role to be reduced to the following office-holders, with a view to ensuring the required 'fluency' and competence in the role:
 - Once every month = Chief Operating Officer and Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor
 - Once every quarter = Executive Director of Capital Development, Director of Human Resources, Risk and Insurance Manager, Deputy Secretary, Head of Security and Chief Financial Officer
- refresher training to be provided for the above officers during the Spring Term 2012.

9. 2012 Objectives

With the support of an independent consultant, the Health and Safety Team has reviewed the role of the Team in supporting the University's wider culture change objectives. As part of this review, representatives of Schools and Departments were consulted about their future needs for improving health and safety performance. The findings from this review, together with the relevant University KPIs and consideration of best practice, will inform the basis of a health and a safety change and improvement plan. Further consultation is required on this plan which includes the following objectives:

- introduce a Safety Office service level agreement with Schools and departments
- review and necessary develop performance measuring systems to ensure that they are relevant, provide information that can practically assist managers to improve local health and safety performance and that demonstrate added value
- review and develop a core health and safety training programme and ensure that it provides value for money
- review and advise on cost-effective approaches for health and safety training and information resources, including relevant opportunities for extending e-learning resources
- develop strategies and initiatives to improve student commitment to health and safety responsibilities
- develop and implement initiatives to improve performance in key target areas of health safety responsibilities, eg slips, trips and falls and fire prevention
- explore and implement opportunities for improving consultation on health and safety matters with and between key stakeholder groups eg. Schools and departments and students.
- develop strategies and initiatives to improve information to and engagement with students and their commitment to health and safety.

Detailed proposals and progress will be reported to the Health and Safety Committee during the coming year.

Appendix 1 – Accident data

Table 2 Total Number of Non Reportable Accidents

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
All Accidents					
Staff	46	33	57	62	58
Students	13	24	45	36	22
Others	3	13	46	26	15
TOTAL	62	70	154	124	97

In total there were 58 accidents involving injury reported by staff at Aston during the calendar year 2011. Significantly the number of accidents involving staff has not increased compared with the previous year, but has remained roughly the same.

Table 3– Reportable Accidents (RIDDOR)

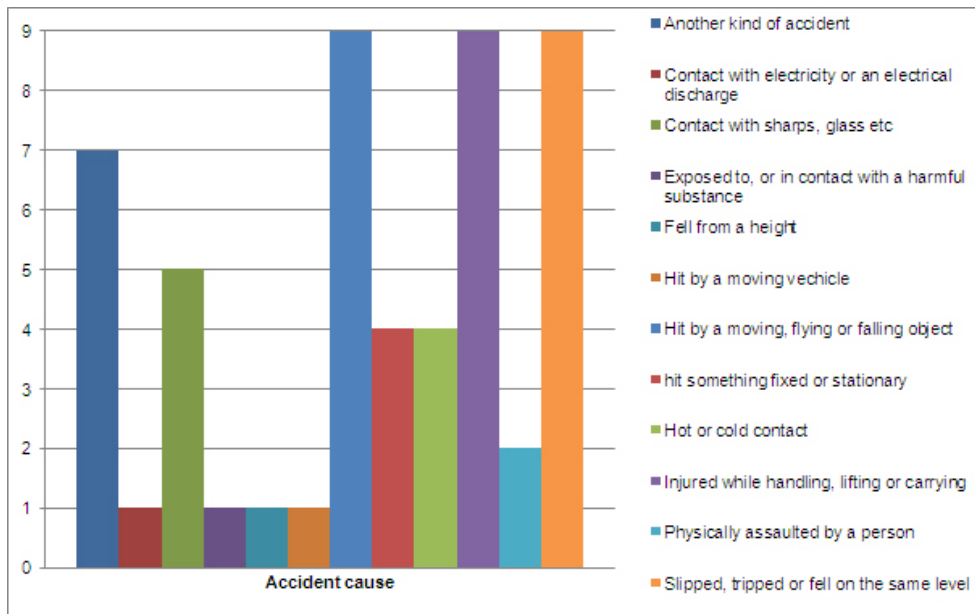
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
RIDDOR					
Staff	3	3	5	5	2
Students	0	0	1	0	0
Others	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	3	3	6	6	2

Two accidents were reported in the reporting period to the Health and Safety Executive where the staff member was absent from work for more than 3 days.

Table 4 – Accident rates at Aston in relation to Sector Data

Injury rate per 1000 staff at risk					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Accident rates for staff at Aston	26.9	19.3	44.3	42.7	38.7
Accident rates for staff in HE Sector	33.3	30.6	30.7	31.72	30.71
Injury Rate per 1000 students at risk					
Accident rates for students at Aston	2.8	2.6	4.6	3.6	2.12
Accident rates for students in HE	2.75	2.66	2.30	2.60	2.67

Table 5 Non reportable Staff accidents for 2011

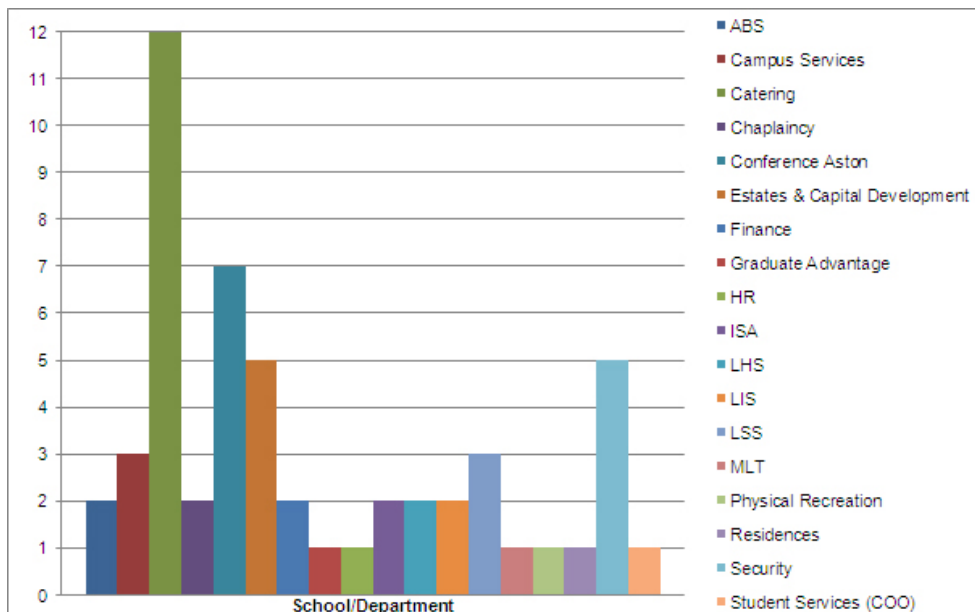


The general trend appears to be roughly the same or marginally downward on 2010. As in previous years the majority of accidents have resulted from:

- slips, trips and falls
- handling, lifting and carrying
- moving, flying or falling objects

This is a key priority area for 2012.

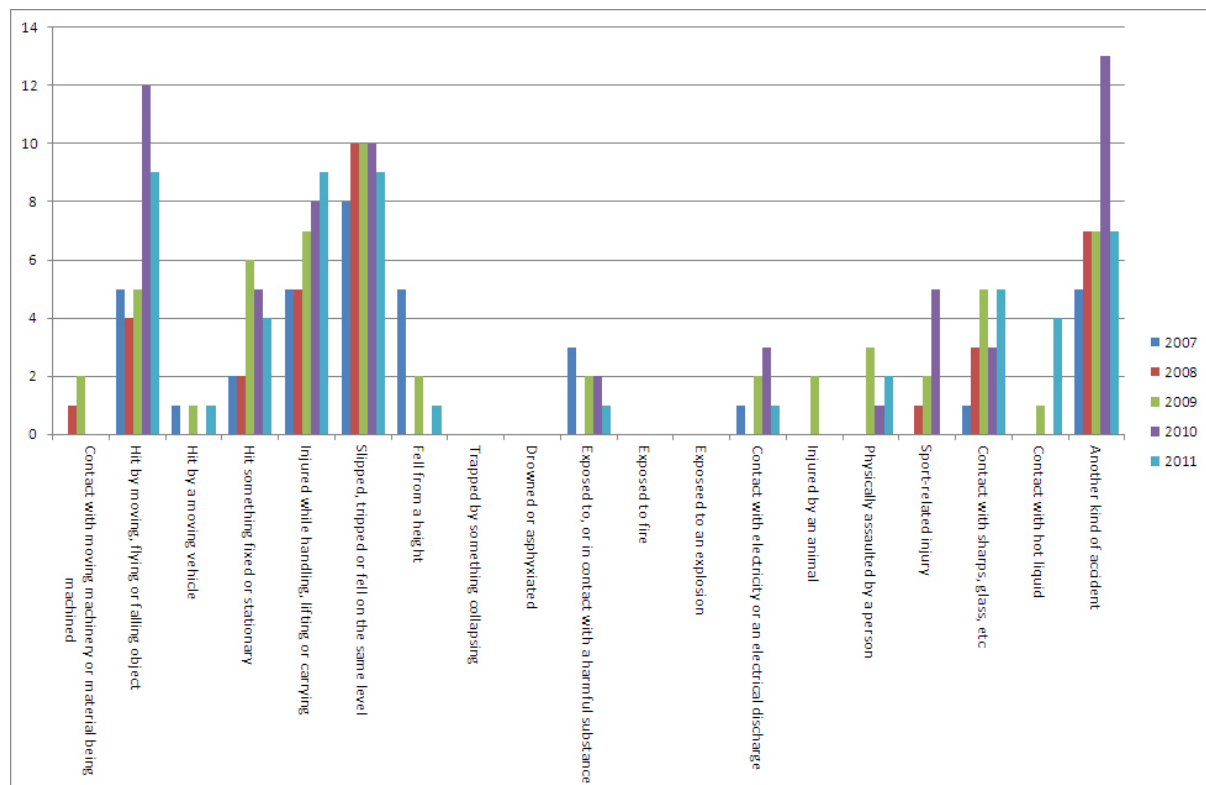
Table 6 Comparison of Accidents by School/Department



Conference Aston and Catering @Aston have taken a very proactive and robust approach to improve safety during 2011. The central Health and Safety team will be working closely with those areas with a high incidence of accidents to improve performance.

Near Miss reporting: During 2011 the Safety Office received five near miss reports. We encourage near miss reporting i.e. incidents that did not cause injury but had the potential to cause harm, as they are key learning events.

Table 7 Comparison of Non reportable accidents between the years 2007–2011



The general trend appears to be roughly the same or marginally downward on 2010. Monitoring of the accident statistics has shown that a significant proportion of injuries are caused by manual handling activities and slips and falls.

10. Fire Alarm Activations

Appendix 2 below provides a summary of the number of fire alarm activations received during 2011.

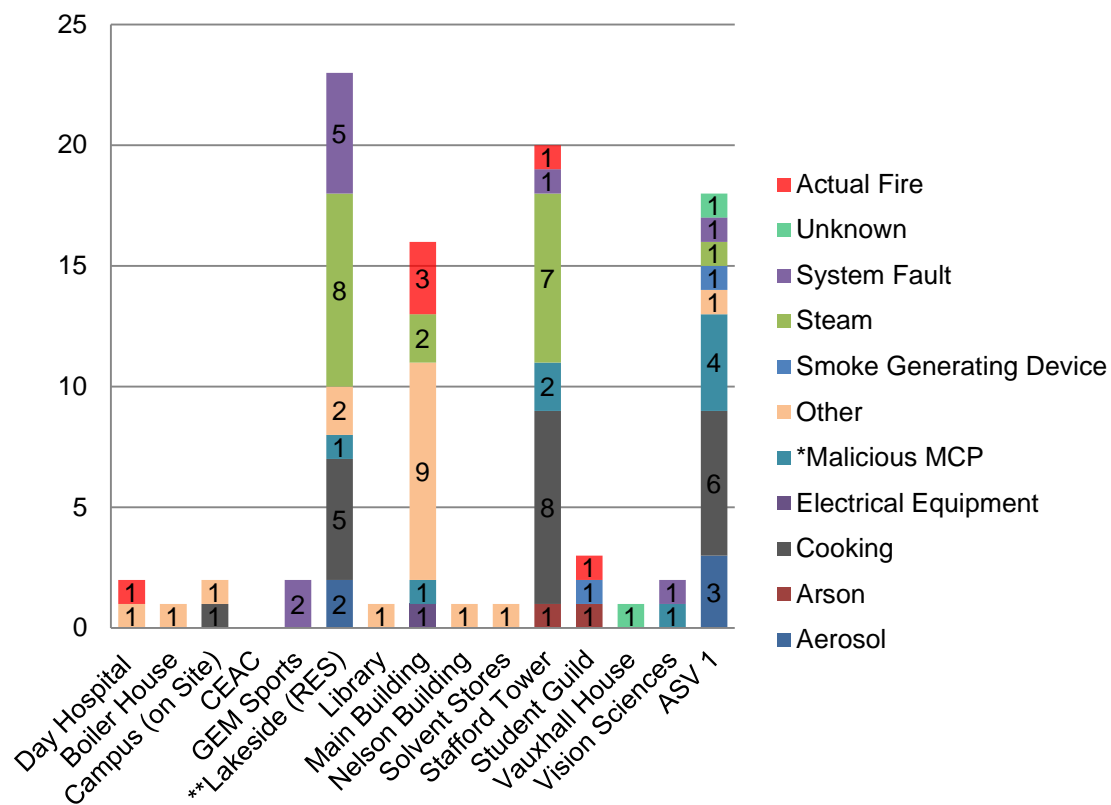
Within residences, cooking remained a significant cause of fire alarm activations during the year, despite the numerous ways in which residence services staff sought to remind occupants of the need to remain vigilant whilst cooking, and never leave cooking unattended.

Also within residences (particularly Lakeside and Stafford Tower), steam continued to provide a source of fire alarm activations. This was mainly the result of bathroom doors being left open whilst occupants took long hot showers, causing sensitive fire alarm equipment to activate.

Nearly all campus buildings have noted a decrease in the number of activations over the past 12 months. The Library and the Nelson buildings noted the most significant reductions. The Main Building continues to experience fire alarm activations, although there does not appear to be any specific pattern to the causes.

What was pleasing to note was the reduction in deliberate arson attempts on campus, with only one incident recorded in 2011.

Appendix 2 – Summary of Fire Alarm Activations



*MCP = Manual Call Point

**The fire alarm system in Lakeside (RES) is of an older style and is more susceptible to being triggered by steam and aerosols. During recent years fire alarm systems have improved in a drive to reduce false alarms, and these types of alarm systems have been installed in all other student residences.

Residential Services are currently working on a student training video which will be ready for the 2012 intake, with the intention of reducing false alarms caused by cooking, steam & aerosol use.

The video is produced by Campus Life and has been taken up by around 20 universities; we are currently in the process of editing the content to make it suitable for Aston University.

As far as fire alarm activations in the Main Building are concerned, we will continue to monitor the incidents and attempt to identify trends.