

The University of Dublin

Trinity College

Minutes of the College Safety Committee Meeting, 15 December 2006

Present Vice Provost (Prof. R. Byrne), Mrs. Ingrid Hook, Mr T Kearney, Dr. M. Bridge, Dr. R. Russell, Dr. D. McGrath, Mr. B. Garrahan, Mr. N. Leddy, Ms. A. Taylor, Ms. R. Palileo, Mr. P. Mc Donnell (for DOB), Mr. T. Merriman.

In Attendance Prof. P. Humphries (Items 3 & 4), Mr. J. Comey

Apologies Ms E Lee, Dr L Bradley, Mr. G. Lyons, Ms. D. Keogh, Mr D Buggy

SA/ 06-07/01 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 July 2006 were approved and signed

SA/ 06-07/02 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i Arising out of the discussion on disabled egress from buildings it was agreed that the College Secretary be contacted to designate a contact person for staff members with a disability.
- ii The College Safety Officer reported that he had obtained a quotation for air sampling equipment and that he was pursuing this.

SA/ 06-07/03 Report on a Fire in the Pharmacy Building

The College Safety Officer tabled a report on a fire that had occurred on July 28, 2006 in laboratory 212 in the School of Pharmacy, Panoz Building. The report included a copy of a report from a forensic engineer which indicated that the likely cause of the fire was overheating of a 'ballast' in a light fitting.

Mrs. Hook expressed concern that this was the second major fire in the area in two years. There had been some disruption to teaching and a serious disruption to research. There was serious concern among her staff as to their safety noting that concerns that had been expressed over the years with regard to ventilation and temperature in the building. She felt that, while procedures within the School had improved since the first fire, there were still issue around emergency responses and unfamiliarity of security officers with the building. She enquired what actions were being taken on the recommendation in the forensic engineers report.

The Fire/Safety Officer set out his concerns in relation to the building and expressed the view that it was not in compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate obtained from the Local Authority. He noted that some of the electrical installation exposed after the fire was not in conduit, that compartmentation (fire stopping) was incomplete or breached and that ventilation had not been finished in the way it should have been.

Mrs. Hook requested that a safety assessment of the whole building be carried out to determine whether it constituted a safe working environment. Mr.

Leddy queried whether it was safe for staff and students to continue to occupy the building.

The Deputy Director of Buildings responded that issues of compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate will be investigated and, if there are any issues that require rectification, these will be dealt with. He reported that the building and systems worked well in the fire, the fire was confined to the area where it originated and the smoke venting operated as designed.

The College Safety Officer gave assurances that there is nothing to indicate that the building is not safe for occupation and issues of non-compliance, if any, did not contribute to the fire.

The Committee agreed that there was there was a need to ensure that the building is safe and that any issues of non-compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate need to be investigated.

The Committee agreed that it should have oversight of the safety aspects of new projects and, in particular, any trimming back in new projects that might impact on safety.

The committee recommended that signage and wayfinding directions in the Panoz Building be improved.

SA/ 06-07/04 Concerns in respect of Hazardous Materials Facility

At the invitation of the Vice-Provost, Prof. Humphries of the Vice-Deanery of Genetics and Microbiology presented his concerns and those of his colleagues who work underneath the Hazardous Materials Facility which is located on the roof of the Smurfit Institute of Genetics. These concerns related to their physical and mental well being as they may have to work under a significant volume of solvents. These solvents, he believes, pose serious fire and explosion risks as well as health risks to persons working in the area. Many of the solvents have very low exposure thresholds, some as low as 1 part per million, and some are known cancer agents. The fears of his colleagues are exacerbated when they see staff of the Facility wearing breathing apparatus.

The fact that there have been two fires in the adjoining building in two years has further heightened the fears of his colleagues and the heightened anxiety they experience is impacting on their work. The report previously commissioned by College from a Dr. Menzies, Consulting Engineer, did nothing to allay these fears and confirmed their view that such a facility should normally be located at ground floor level away from people.

Prof. Humphries requested that the College Safety Committee reconsider the operation of the Hazardous Materials Facility and relocate it to a more suitable location or cease its operation altogether.

Professor Humphries confirmed that the main concern related to the storage of bulk solvents in the Hazardous Materials Facility and that there was a lesser concern about its use for handling other chemicals in small quantities. They had no significant concerns about the handling of biological waste.

The Vice-Provost queried whether these concerns could be allayed by independent inspection and advice or whether people would be happy if the

facility was accommodated at ground floor in the building, if such remodeling were possible. Prof. Humphries responded that neither was likely to be acceptable to his colleagues.

The Vice-Provost thanked Prof. Humphries for his contribution and undertook that the Committee would give his presentation its full consideration.

The College Safety Officer confirmed that the facility is not and has not been used for the storage of bulk solvents. These are currently stored in inadequate huts located between Anatomy and the Wellcome Building (Biochemistry). This location has been of concern to staff in both of these buildings. The College Safety Officer confirmed that it was his view that the location on top of the Genetics building was the safer option.

After further discussion the meeting was adjourned, because of time pressure, to a date in early January 2007 to be agreed at which time this and the remaining items on the agenda will be dealt with.

Signed _____
Vice-Provost

Date _____