



Circular Letter PBU 5/2005

Please see [Circular 0085/2006](#) in relation to this Circular

School Building Section, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Review of Occupational Health and Safety in the Technologies in Post-Primary Schools

To: School Management Authorities, Second Level Schools

1. Background:

In 2004 the State Claims Agency (SCA), in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science (DES), conducted a risk review to assess occupational health and safety standards in post-primary technology workshops – subjects covered were Materials Technology (wood), Construction Studies, Metalwork, Engineering and Technology.

The objective of the review was to assess existing standards and to publish a report and guidelines which would outline any deficiencies identified. This review has been finalised and the report (copy enclosed) has been published. The report makes a number of recommendations addressing the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in schools and the environment, equipment and services in Technology workshops covering areas such as training, hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control.

2. Risk Review Findings:

Civil law places a duty of care on School Management Authorities (SMAs) to provide a safe working environment for staff and students. In effect, this means that SMAs must ensure that machines comply with the relevant technical standards. Statutory legislation introduced specific requirements for the safeguarding of machinery in the Safety, Health and Welfare as Work, General Applications Regulations, 1993 – Part IV, Work Equipment. These regulations set out guidelines in respect of stopping/starting; emergency stops; guarding of moving parts etc. All machines including those manufactured or purchased prior to 1993 have to comply with these requirements. Subsequent to this, the requirement for CE mark was introduced and all machinery being placed on the market must have a CE mark indicating the machine complies with the relevant directives.

The report found that a significant number of the larger machines in use do not comply with statutory requirements, for example, inappropriate or inadequate guarding of mechanical parts, inadequate stop/start controls and/or emergency stops, failure to meet braking requirements and so on. Of the equipment surveyed in post-primary technology workshops, 70% of Metalwork/Engineering Machines; 53% of Materials Technology (Wood)/Construction Studies machines and 64% of equipment in Technology rooms did not have a CE Mark.

The report recommends that equipment should either be upgraded to meet the relevant Health and Safety standards or replaced. The report also recommends that all redundant machinery and equipment must be removed from the workshops and be disposed of in compliance with Health, Safety and Environmental requirements.

3. Grant Aid for Metalwork/Engineering and Technology Rooms:

As an immediate response the DES is providing grant aid as follows:

| Room | Total Grant | Payable in 2005 | Payable in 2006 |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Metalwork/Engineering | €70,000 per room | €56,000 | €14,000 |
| Technology | €15,000 per room | €12,000 | €3,000 |
| Personal Protection Equipment Metalwork/Engineering, Materials Technology (Wood)/Construction Studies and Technology | €1,500 per room | €1,200 | €300 |

These grants are been paid to schools on the basis that little if any investment has been allocated by DES to replace equipment since 1995. New schools or schools where workshops have been refurbished since 1995 are being omitted from the proposed grants. Other schools with a large scale building project at construction are also excluded.

4. Materials Technology (Wood), Construction Studies Rooms:

The safety issues identified in relation to woodwork equipment will be addressed separately in the context of the Department's dust extraction programme. Circular Letter M45/01 dealing with Wood Dust Extraction Systems in Second Level Schools which was originally issued in June 2001 is being up-dated and a copy of the revised circular will be issued to all schools in 2006.

5. When will the Grants be paid?

The first instalment (80%) will be paid before the end of 2005. SMAs need not apply and the funding will be lodged directly to school accounts via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT).

The second instalment (20%) will be paid in 2006 on receipt of written confirmation from the SMA:

- a. that the SMA has carried out an audit of all the equipment in their workshops in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the report. SMA to provide report on number and type of rooms audited and if these rooms require new/upgraded equipment
- b. that tenders for the replacement/upgrading of all non compliant machines have been obtained in accordance with the DES guidelines ([Circular M6/02](#) available on www.education.ie) and DES specifications
- c. that a contract has been placed with the companies that have provided the lowest tender meeting DES specifications
- d. that all obsolete machines have been disposed of in compliance with Health, Safety and Environmental requirements.

6. How is the grant to be spent?

The grant must be spent on machinery and equipment (including the upgrading of services if required) in Metalwork/Engineering and Technology Rooms (in accordance with the Department's "ENGM" and "TECH" Equipment Lists) in the first instance and if there is a balance remaining it should be spent on machinery and equipment in Materials Technology (Wood)/Construction Studies Rooms. All of the Department's Equipments Lists are now available on the Department Website www.education.ie Schools must carry out a risk assessment of all the machinery and equipment in their workshops. The machinery Risk Assessment Tool in Appendix 6 of the report should be completed, in respect of each workshop, in this regard.

The decision to either upgrade or replace machinery and equipment should be made on the basis of the completed risk assessment.

7. Value for Money:

The Department recommends that SMAs purchasing new equipment for Engineering/Metalwork Rooms should award contracts on a section by section basis for Sections 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 i.e. to the company that provided the lowest tender to specification for the complete section. In respect of Section 2 (Machine Tools) it is recommended that this section is broken down into individual items and orders are placed based on the lowest tender to specification for each of the 13 items in this section. (Example: Company A could receive an order for Section 1 and Section 7 and three items from Section 2 while company B might receive an order for sections 3, 4 and 5 and the remaining 10 items in Section 2 and company C might receive an order for Section 6).

SMAs that purchase higher specification machines than those recommended by the Department

must fund the increased cost of these machines from their own resources.

8. Queries:

Queries concerning this Circular should be addressed to Ms Jackie Wade or Ms. Veronica Murray, Furniture and Equipment Section, Department of Education and Science, Tullamore Co. Offaly.

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