

Safety Alert – Health Assessments

Number 15-09

1 BACKGROUND

It has recently come to our notice that staff members are not making appointments for health assessments with the University Health Service when directed to do so. The assessments can be one of the following:

- ★ **Pre-placement health assessments:** These are conducted as part of the recruitment and on-boarding process, where it has been determined that there are hazards associated with the inherent requirements of the job that could impact the health and safety of the staff member e.g. Musicians who are potentially exposed to noise; Laboratory Technicians who may be exposed to radiation or other hazardous substances. The purpose of the pre-placement health assessment is to obtain baseline health information, to determine if the staff member will require ongoing health surveillance and to provide an opportunity to give them advice about the risk controls they need to follow. It also helps to identify where reasonable accommodation may be required to enable a person to carry out the functions of the job safely and without risk to health.
- ★ **Routine Health Surveillance:** These assessments are conducted to monitor the health status of a person who has potential exposure to a hazard that could harm their health e.g. respiratory function for exposure to dusts; hearing tests for persons exposed to noise; blood tests for persons exposed to heavy metal particles.

It is a concern when staff do not attend for health assessment when requested as there is potential for them to be exposed to hazards which could be harmful to their health and the University is at risk of failing in its duty of care to ensure a safe and healthy environment for work and study.

2 ACTION

- ★ Human Resource Services, the Health and Safety team and the Assistant Director, Health Professional Services are working together to revise the process for ensuring new staff members are directed to the University Health Service for pre-placement health assessment when required and to follow up promptly when appointments are not made.
- ★ An email is going to be sent to all staff members who were advised to attend for a pre-placement health assessment where there is no record of their attendance, to ask them to make an appointment with the Health Service. An email will also be sent to their direct Supervisor to inform them that their staff member is being contacted and to request that the Supervisor ensures that an appointment is made.
- ★ An email is also going to staff members who were requested to attend the Health Service for a routine health surveillance examination where the records indicate that they did not attend. Their direct Supervisor is also being emailed to inform them that their staff member is being contacted and to request that they ensure that an appointment is made.

A concerted effort is required from Human Resource Services, the Health and Safety team and Faculties and Divisions to ensure that health assessments are conducted when required to meet our duty of care and prevent staff members from the potential hazards of their work.

Further information about health assessments can be found in the UON Health and Safety Procedures 5.1 Pre-placement Health Assessment http://www.newcastle.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/193431/HSP-5.1-Pre-placement-Health-Assessment-v2.pdf and 10.4 Health Surveillance http://www.newcastle.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193477/HSP-10.4-Health-Surveillance-v3.pdf