Turning safety observations into messages
Risk assessments within an academic context
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The challenges and (our ACS-funded) solution

• Addressing a perception that laboratory risk assessments are “just a hoop I have to jump through”
• Embedding a safety culture in a university setting that recognises risk assessments are about intellectual engagement
• That it’s paramount to address professional and personal responsibilities; legal compliance can then follow

• How to tackle this?
• A short, compelling video........
Background

• As departmental chair, School of Chemistry, University of Bristol

• THREE basic, simple rules:
  1. Everyone is always appropriately protected - safety glasses/lab coats + whatever else is necessary
  2. A risk assessment is done for every procedure, every time you do that procedure
  3. No lone working - ever

• Risk assessments were the hardest to crack yet underpin 1 and 3

• Why? The “paper trail conjecture”
What’s so hard about why do a risk assessment?

• “I have to rewrite it each time? Really? Why can’t I just copy it?”
• Form not function was the focus
• Confusion around legal compliance vs. an individual’s personal and professional responsibilities to themselves and others
• There were then lengthy explanations about what was needed, how it was about “thinking” (not mindless cut and paste) and how a risk assessment could inform you in so many ways
• There had to be a better way to put “thinking” (intellectual engagement) at the heart of a “why do a risk assessment?”
How can we make safety content engaging?
LABORATORY RISK ASSESSMENT
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Where to next?

• Aiming to produce a series of safety videos based on use of simple metaphors (where appropriate) and clear messaging

• Covering other topics:
  • Systems connections between green chemistry and lab safety
  • Interpreting GHS label for risk assessment purposes
  • Laboratory ventilation awareness
  • Lone working