

Ergonomics and Health in Modern Offices E Grandjean, ed. (Pp 510, £35.00.) London; Taylor and Francis, 1984.

This collection of papers presented at the Turin Conference on Ergonomic and Health Aspects in Modern Offices in 1983 highlights the fact that office life is becoming increasingly technical and complicated. Traditional ergonomic checklists are inadequate to cope with the trend towards multi-functional office spaces housing a vast array of electronic equipment such as visual display terminals, microfiche readers, laser printers, and photocopying machines. In many offices environmental problems related to some "traditional" factors, such as noise, lighting, heat, and cold are still present and in some cases are increasing side by side with the introduction of new technologies and new forms of work organisation.

The 510 page book comprises some 76 papers, aspects of using visual display units predominating, with an excellent section on ophthalmology in consideration of the contentious topic of visual "fitness" for visual display unit operators. Also covered are conclusions concerning visual, musculoskeletal, pregnancy, dermatological, neurological, and stress problems suspected of affecting visual display unit operators in relation to work organisation, environment, and equipment design hazards.

Of toxicological interest is reference to the effects of sealed office buildings to conserve energy, the so termed "building illness" syndrome that appears to emanate from these conditions. Papers covering the quality of indoor air in offices include reference to allergies caused by sources of biological contaminants such as humidifiers, and health risks caused by pollutants such as tobacco smoke, building and furniture materials, insulating boards, solvents used for cleaning, photocopying equipment, and photochemical "smog" formations. Altogether a stimulating book and a useful source of reference material for anyone dealing with this challenging field of occupational health, which is newly emerging as seeking increased attention.

J CONYERS

Biological Monitoring and Surveillance of Workers Exposed to Chemicals. Edited by A Aitio, V Riihimaki, and H Vainio. (£64.00.) New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1984.

These papers were presented at an international course on biological monitoring of exposures to industrial chemicals that was held in Helsinki in 1980. It is astonishing that it has taken four years to see the light of day, especially as the bulk of the text has been prepared photographically from typescript. There are 33 contributors, all but three of whom hail from Scandinavia, and this has led to a certain unevenness in both style and content.

Many of the chapters reiterate what may be found in dozens of other books—there is little new to say about most of the toxic metals or about the solvents—but several chapters deal with topics that will be unfamiliar with many occupational health practitioners (or at least, they would have been in 1980!). Those which deal with solvent interactions, with urinary thioether excretion, with the excretion of mutagenic substances in the urine, haemoglobin alkylation, and chromosomal aberrations are all valuable. In general, however, the editors have allowed the authors to stray too far from their brief, and several have used the opportunity to present a (presumably unrefereed) version of their own work.

What I looked for and did not find in this book was any guidance on biological monitoring. Scarcely any of the authors say what should be done as the result of all the monitoring and surveillance which is to be carried out, and where is the reference to action levels? Anyone coming to this book in the hope that he will be given clear or concise information on how to monitor a hazard in the workplace will be greatly disappointed. With the present parlous state of the pound, this book will cost well over £50 and at that price I regret that I am unable to recommend it.

H A WALDRON

Correction

Health of workers exposed to electric fields (February 1985)

The last sentence on page 75 should read "On interrogation at the end of the period, it gave a single measure of integrated exposure to all field strengths above about 60 volts per metre."