
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



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What's that Person Doing in Our Office?

A key element of a workplace safety program is identification of issues that can cause harm (a.k.a., hazards) so that they can either be eliminated or the risks reduced to an acceptable level.

If someone from EH&S comes to your office or shop, we hope you will be receptive to them inspecting the area for purposes of identifying hazards. Once hazards are identified, we can recommend actions to eliminate the hazards or reduce the risks. These



actions can be as simple as entering a work order for Physical Plant to repair something, or they could be as complicated as prescribing specific training and personal protective equipment to help reduce risks.

When we come to your work area, we will be courteous, respectful, and as unobtrusive as possible under the circumstances. We will also provide you with guidance associated with any issues that we detect. And please remember that we aren't coming to catch you doing something wrong, we are coming to help you stay safe.

Want to get a head start on assessing hazards in your office or shop? Just [download the appropriate checklist](#) from our website and do a self-inspection. Contact EH&S if you need assistance with any of the issues identified during your self-inspection.

Let's all go home uninjured and healthy. Identify workplace hazards and reduce the associated risks.

Lab Safety Seminar is August 31

It's almost time for the annual laboratory safety seminar. Mark your calendar for August 31, 1:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., in the University Center Theatre.

We promise to provide you with an assortment of useful information, laughs, sighs, cookies, door prizes, and more.

If you can't attend the seminar or you attended within the past three to four years, try our [on-line lab safety modules](#). UofM employees just have to login to our training website with their UofM credentials, then enroll in each of the four lab safety modules.

Protect Your Eyes from Injuries

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), wearing eye protection could result in a 90% reduction in on-the-job eye injuries requiring medical attention. See the [AAO web site](#) for more information and eye-saving tips.

Are you wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment for the work you are performing?

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2016 Injury and Illness Data

A [summary of occupational injuries and illnesses](#) experienced by UofM employees in calendar year 2016 is now available (click link above). The 40 cases classified as “recordable” by OSHA resulted in employees missing 139 days of work. Some of those 40 cases resulted in another 416 days of employees being transferred to different jobs or having work restrictions imposed.

The top three injuries experienced by UofM employees in 2016 were 1) slips, trips, falls; 2) overexertion or repetitive movement; and 3) caught between, struck by, or struck against an object. Details are included in the on-line summary.

Learn how to prevent slips, trips, and falls by enrolling in the [on-line class](#). Contact EH&S at 901.678.2740 for help in preventing accidents.

Alarming Numbers

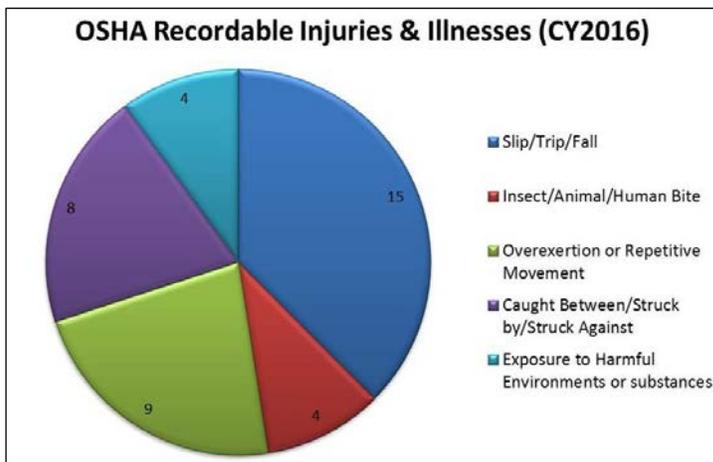
When the fire alarm sounds are you, your colleagues, and students waiting to determine the cause of the alarm, or are you getting out of there? We hope you are doing the latter.

Interestingly, people at Lipman School and Campus School are making the rest of us look bad. The typical time needed to fully evacuate those schools is approximately 130 to 160 seconds. However, evacuation times from some dorms and classroom buildings are much longer than desired – enough time for lives to be lost due to smoke and/or flames if there had been a real fire.

Seconds save lives in a fire. Don't delay exiting a building when the alarm sounds.

Injured Researcher vs. University of Hawaii

Thea Ekins-Coward, the 29 year old post-doc who lost her arm and received other injuries as a result of an explosion at the University of Hawaii – Manoa (UH), and her spouse filed a civil suit against UH and personnel associated with the university.



Attorneys for Ekins-Coward allege that UH and others “negligently, grossly negligently, carelessly and recklessly breached their duty by providing unsafe and improper equipment, by failing to provide adequate training, by failing to follow safety codes, standards and regulations in laboratory safety, by directing Thea Ekins-Coward to

undertake experiments that were inherently and unnecessarily unsafe,”

Don't Forget to Flush!

EH&S personnel continue to find emergency eyewashes that are not being flushed on a weekly basis. If your eyes are injured by a chemical splash or similar event, flushing your eyes with contaminated water can turn an already serious situation into a tragic one. So, please, please flush those eyewashes regularly to remove rust, protozoa, and other crud that can further damage or destroy your vision.

Who is responsible for flushing the eyewash in your lab or shop on a weekly basis?

Laboratory Chemical Summaries from NLM

The NIH's National Library of Medicine has added [Laboratory Chemical Safety Summaries](#) to its PubChem web site. The summaries include a great deal of useful information compiled to help you stay safe in the lab; however, they should not be considered a replacement for [Safety Data Sheets](#).

Texas Universities Settle with EPA

Baylor University, Texas Christian University, and Texas A&M University recently reached settlements with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for hazardous waste violations at their respective facilities.

In addition to agreeing to correct all violations, Baylor will pay \$11,330 in civil penalties and purchase specialized equipment for the Waco Fire Department, TCU will pay \$30,591, and TAMU will pay \$141,912 for violations at four of its campuses.

All of the institutions were cited for failing to take required actions related to changes in their waste generator status.

Don't forget to perform a waste determination before placing materials into the trash.

Florida Institute of Technology Fined \$64k

Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) and EPA reached a \$64,000 settlement associated with a 2016 inspection of FIT facilities. According to *Florida Today*, inspectors from EPA and State of Florida found waste violations that included the following:

- Failure to perform waste determinations,
- Deteriorating containers,
- Leaking containers,
- Failure to perform weekly waste inspections,
- Wastes stored without a permit, and
- Improperly labeled waste containers.

FIT was cited for environmental violations in 2008 and 2012 as well, also paying fines.

See our [“Guide to Hazardous Waste Management”](#) for guidance on managing hazardous waste.

Mixing Oil with Water is Bad Practice

Long ago, spilling or dumping oil wasn't considered a big deal. Today, however, it is recognized as a really big deal, one that endangers the environment and could result in huge civil or criminal penalties. And the term “oil” includes vegetable oils, not just petroleum.

If washed into a storm sewer, oil will flow untreated into the body of water at the end of the sewer pipe, then travel to other bodies of water and contaminate each of them. Oil

spilled onto the soil creates problems as it soaks through soil, potentially contaminating the aquifer that supplies our drinking water.

Here are some tips to help protect our environment and avoid regulatory violations:

- Stop spilled oil and grease from entering storm drains or the soil. (Almost anything can be used to make a dike or berm, including dirt.)
- Never place oil-containing equipment in a dumpster. (Drain oil completely from equipment being sent for disposal.)
- Soak up spilled oil and grease. (Oil Dri or specially designed absorbent pillows are effective.)
- Place drained or absorbed oil in a securely closed, leak resistant container; label as “Used Oil” and hold for proper disposal.
- Always store oil or grease-containing equipment and containers in secondary containment that will catch any spills or leaks.

Call EH&S at 901.678.2044 to report or get help with chemical spills, including oil and grease.



Scary Incidents at Other Institutions

University of Idaho

Students testing an experimental rocket fuel at the University of Idaho were injured in April when the test went awry, causing an explosion. Four injured students were taken to a hospital where at least one underwent surgery.

Are you carefully analyzing hazards and taking appropriate measures to minimize risks before initiating a task?

Dickinson State University

The *Grand Forks Herald* reported that a chemistry professor at Dickinson State University was injured and required surgery after an explosion occurred during a classroom demonstration. The professor was said to be demonstrating “flash powder.” Detonation of the material was apparently initiated through grinding with a mortar and pestle.

Are you using appropriate precautions when working with energetic materials?

University of Iowa

A laboratory fire, apparently caused by an extension cord, resulted in an estimated \$1,500,000 in damage to the Bowen Science Building at the University of Iowa. Had the sprinkler system not activated and confined the June fire, it would likely have been much worse.

Extension cords are only intended for temporary use under appropriate conditions. Ignoring those facts can result in tragedy. See our [fire safety tips](#) or call 901.678.4671 for guidance.

Are You and Your People Being Trained?

Every UofM employee is legally required to complete a minimum amount of safety training, and some jobs require completion of several very specialized classes. To help meet these training obligations, EH&S offers safety seminars every month.

We can also work around your schedule to present classes for individual lab groups, shops, and entire departments. And don't forget our [online classes](#) for ultimate convenience.

If you are a supervisor, please remember that it's your responsibility to make sure your personnel are trained (see [UM1293](#)). Help your personnel develop good safety habits through example and by ensuring that they are given time to attend required training.

See the [lists of required training and associated registration information on our web site.](#)



Physical Plant employee experiences a short drop, then dangles from a lanyard during a fall protection training demo

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