

\$908,000 Penalty Proposed for UPR

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a penalty of \$908,000 against the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) due to alleged mismanagement of hazardous waste, discharges into waterways, and improper air emissions.

This case is unusual because UPR conducted an environmental audit and self-disclosed violations to the EPA. Self-disclosure would normally protect the university from significant financial penalties; however, EPA found that UPR was ineligible for such protection because it was not correcting violations.

In addition to air and water violations, the university was alleged to have stored hazardous wastes in containers that were improperly labeled, leaking, not closed, and held in an unsafe manner.

Tenn. Top Ten Waste Violations

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation recently released a list of the top ten hazardous waste violations cited in West Tennessee. Here is a summary of the top 10:

1. Accumulation start date violations
2. Open containers (and you thought this was only illegal in your car)
3. Universal waste (fluorescent bulbs, batteries, etc.) violations
4. Used oil labeling errors
- 5, 6. Drums, containers not marked with the words "Hazardous Waste"
7. Contingency plan violations
8. Failure to perform weekly inspections
9. Failure to have a waste reduction plan
10. Failure to make waste determinations

How does your lab, shop, or studio measure up?

Sources of Assistance

Director of EH&S 678-4672
Radiation Safety Officer 678-4672
Chemical Hygiene Officer 678-4672
Environmental Protection Specialist . . 678-2044
Laboratory Safety Specialist 678-2740
Fax 678-4673
Emergency (Fire, Police, Ambulance,
after hours Chemical/Radiological) . . 678-4357
EH&S Home Page
. <http://www.people.memphis.edu/~ehas/>

How About Those Chemists?

We wanted to take a few lines to point out some impressive work being done in the Chemistry Department. The chemists currently have an active safety committee that reviews reported accidents within the department and takes proactive steps to improve safety. Faculty, staff, graduate students, and even folks

from EH&S are able to participate in the meetings. And these are serious meetings that often last more than an hour.

"Universities should set an example for environmental compliance since these institutions are preparing the future professionals of our society"

Alan J. Steinburg, EPA Regional Administrator

Among the accomplishments that can be attributed to the Chemistry safety committee are improved safety procedures for students, thorough self-inspections of labs with proactive steps to correct detected safety issues, and greater accountability for teaching assistants in promoting safety.

In addition to the Chemistry Department, safety committees are currently known to exist in Physical Plant and Physics.

Is your department proactive about safety?

UV Transilluminators Pose Risk

An article in the October, 2005, issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene* discusses recent research showing that ultraviolet (UV) transilluminators have the potential to expose users to excessive amounts of UV radiation.

Authors of the article studied several UV transilluminators and found that if covers/shields were not used as intended, were out of place, or were cracked or broken, operators could be overexposed to UV Radiation in less than a minute. When covers/shields were correctly installed, used, and in good repair, they were highly effective in protecting personnel who operated these devices.

If you use a UV transilluminator, please check it out before use to make sure the filters are in place and in good condition. And don't forget the personal protective equipment like safety glasses or goggles designed to filter out UV (see manufacturers' specifications for UV protection ability). Areas of skin that might be exposed to UV radiation should be covered by clothing or a good sun screen - just in case.

Cleveland State Professor Electrocuted

An associate professor at Cleveland (Ohio) State University was electrocuted in his biology lab last August. An official investigation into the death revealed that a fluorescent light fixture attached to a metal rack had been connected to an ungrounded timer through a ground by-pass adapter. When the fixture's ballast shorted, lethal voltage from the fixture appeared on the metal rack rather than being shunted to ground.

Are you maintaining proper ground connections on all electrical devices?

We're Tooting Our Horns, Again

Katherine Miller, Laboratory Safety Specialist, recently completed education, experience, training, and testing requirements to become a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager (CHMM). As a result of Katherine's achievement, all of the EH&S professional staff have the CHMM credential - something that most universities and industries would envy.

Al Simpson, EH&S Director, recently met education, training, testing, and other requirements, of the National Registry of Certified Chemists (NRCC) and was certified as a Chemical Hygiene Officer. There are currently only two certified CHOs in Tennessee, and Al is one of them.

We believe you not only deserve the best possible service from EH&S, but you also deserve to feel confident that we are giving you the best, most reliable consultative services. With our continuing efforts to improve skills and stay on the cutting edge of our fields, we plan to maintain your confidence and discharge our duties in the most professional manner. Professional credentials such as CHMM and NRCC-CHO should help underscore the fact that the U of M EH&S group stacks up nicely against professionals from across the nation.

New on the Web

Several new tools have been added to our web page. Some of these tools include the following:

- Nanotechnology safety - go to either the chemical safety or links page, and scroll down to the link
- Emergency procedures for U of M students and employees - go to the links page and scroll down
- Laboratory-specific standard operating procedure template - go to links and scroll down
- Compendium of Pesticide Common Names - go to Chemical Safety and scroll down to the link
- "Recognizing Hazardous Waste" brochure - go to Downloads and scroll down

Are You Using Eye Protection?

Whether you are working in an art studio, biology lab, chemistry lab, shop, or maintaining the grounds, don't you owe it to yourself and your family to protect your vision? Prevent Blindness America (PBA) says, "More than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day." With use of proper eye protection and work practices, up to 90% of these injuries are thought to be preventable.

To help you select the right eye protection, EH&S has included a personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance document on its web site at www.people.memphis.edu/~ehas/PPEguidelines.pdf. When used with the PPE assessment tool at www.people.memphis.edu/~ehas/WorkPlaceHazardAssessGuide.pdf, you can evaluate all your PPE needs.

That takes care of you, but what about visitors and students? Tennessee law (TCA § 49-50-501) requires "all students, teachers, and others [including visitors] in attendance at courses or in laboratories using" certain materials or processes to wear eye protection. Among the specific processes listed in the law are hot molten metals; milling, sawing, turning, shaping, cutting, grinding or stamping of solid materials; heat treating, tempering or kiln firing; arc welding; and using caustic materials or hot materials.

Do you require your visitors to wear eye protection?

Proper Sharps Disposal Important

Sharps are objects that can penetrate the skin, including hypodermic needles, pasteur pipettes, scalpel and microtome blades, needles with tubing attached, capillary tubes, contaminated broken glass, and related items. All sharps must be placed in puncture-resistant containers that are securely closed when full. Call 2740 for more information about disposal through the University medical waste contractor.

Environmental Health & Safety Staff

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