
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

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Stay Sharp Around Sharps

Sharps are typically thought of as needles, scalpel blades, and other medical equipment; however, a sharp can include all sorts of things that can puncture or cut our bodies. Whether a utility knife or a scalpel, a hypodermic needle or a glass pipette tip, a broken microscope slide or a broken mirror, mishandled sharps can cause serious wounds and introduce harmful bacteria, viruses, or chemicals into our bodies.

Any number of tasks that we perform at work and home can result in a potentially life-changing sharps injury. So, let's remember to stay sharp around sharps by taking steps such as the following:

- Wearing appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment (In the lab, this means at least long pants, sturdy closed-toed shoes, lab coat, gloves, and safety glasses.),
- Using devices like needles and utility knives that include engineered safety features that automatically retract the needle or blade,
- Paying close attention to your task and avoiding dangerous activities when fatigued,
- Handling broken glass and related materials with gloved hands or tongs - not bare hands,
- Taking time to receive appropriate vaccinations (e.g., tetanus, hepatitis B),
- Seeking appropriate medical attention when injured by a sharp,
- Disposing of sharps properly, and
- Implementing other safety measures as dictated by the situation.

Get the point? We hope not.

Contact Katherine Miller (kcmiller) at 678-2740 for guidance on working with and disposing of sharps.



An example of how **not** to store your sharps. Would you really want to have a drawer like this one?

New On-line Training Available from EH&S

As an outgrowth of an instructional design class project completed by Linda Sadler, EH&S will soon offer an on-line version of its hazardous waste class. Through the cooperation of the nice folks in the Advanced Learning Center, the class will be available through Desire2Learn (eLearn.memphis.edu) for initial and annual refresher training.

In addition to Linda's work, we were fortunate to have feedback from faculty, staff, and students from Biology, Biomedical Engineering, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, and Physics during course development. We appreciate the many hours that were invested by everyone involved in the process.

The hazardous waste class is intended as the first step in our initiative to provide on-line training to supplement our current training program. As additional courses are completed, you will have the option to attend face-to-face training or to complete training on-line at a time and place of your choosing.

Contact Ann Marie Cowles (acowles) at 678-5700 to register for the on-line hazardous waste course.

EOC Ready for Communication Emergency

During the holiday break the University's primary Emergency Operations Center was equipped with a new Amateur (Ham) Radio station which can be used for emergency communications during a disaster. Amateur Radio, a non-commercial, federally licensed radio service, has long served as a communication method that comes through when all else fails.

If you would you like to volunteer to assist the University during a crisis, see the volunteer link at <http://bf.memphis.edu/crisis>.

Don't Forget to Report Accidents

If you have a job-related accident or illness, it is important that you report the event to Employee Safety and Health (now part of Physical Plant) using the "First Report of Injury or Illness Form" found at <http://bf.memphis.edu/pp/esh/>.

Sources of Assistance

Director of EH&S	678-4672
Radiation Safety Officer	678-4672
Chemical Hygiene Officer	678-4672
Hazardous Materials 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://ehs.memphis.edu

Proposed Carbon Nanotube Limits

NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, recently issued a draft recommendation on carbon nanotubes and nanofibers that proposes exposure limits for workers. The draft recommended exposure limit (REL), 7 micrograms of carbon nanotubes or carbon nanofibers per cubic meter of air as an eight-hour time-weighted average, was chosen as “the concentration that can most reliably be measured with current instrumentation.” Due to the continuing lack of toxicology data, NIOSH acknowledges that the proposed REL “may not be completely health protective.” The proposal is available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/docket/review/docket161a.

Let’s continue to exercise extra caution when handling nanomaterials: Use engineering controls, administrative controls, and appropriate PPE.



Representation of a nanotube.

Chemicals of Interest Must be Reported

If you are not using TigerBuy to purchase chemicals, you must report purchases of Department of Homeland Security “Chemicals of Interest”(COI) directly to EH&S. TigerBuy users will save time as chemical purchases are automatically reported to EH&S. The COI list is available at www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/chemsec_appendixa-chemicalofinterestlist.pdf.

Hazmat Events at Other Institutions

Auburn University

An article in *theplainsman.com*, noted that Auburn’s Harrison Pharmacy School was evacuated in September when a corroded cylinder of hydrogen chloride gas was found to be in questionable condition. A professor was quoted in the article as indicating the cylinder had been “sitting up there for years.” Need we belabor the issue of inventory control as a way of preventing incidents of this nature?

University of Cincinnati

The News Record reported a laboratory explosion at the UC Engineering Research Center in November. A graduate student was said to have experienced “an unexpected [chemical] reaction” in a fume hood. The explosion was apparently powerful enough to shatter the glass in the fume hood, causing “minor injuries” to the student. Keeping your hood sash as low as practical provides a potentially life saving barrier between you and the bad stuff inside.

Are You Using Disinfectants Properly?

Materials intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any pest is considered to be a pesticide by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Pests include fungi, bacteria, and viruses, as well as the little critters that we all hate.

Failing to follow the application directions on a disinfectant (e.g., Lysol® spray) label, is considered to be a violation of EPA regulations. In fact, EPA just ordered Monmouth-Ocean Hospital Corporation (NJ) to stop applying disinfectants to ambulances by fogging. The disinfectants being used at the hospital were not EPA approved for application by fogging.

Please follow the application directions on the label when using all pesticides, including disinfectants.

Drew University Pays \$145,000 Fine

Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, recently agreed to pay a \$145,000 civil penalty to the EPA due to mis-handling hazardous waste. Drew officials apparently performed a self-audit in 2007, disclosed detected regulatory violations, and corrected those violations. Unfortunately, it appears that Drew failed to stay in compliance.

A 2009 EPA investigation revealed that personnel at Drew stored containers of paint, stains, enamels, and adhesives “haphazardly” outside and on the ground; failed to properly identify discarded chemicals (e.g., mercury, sulfuric acid) as hazardous waste; and stored hazardous waste without a permit.

Managing hazardous waste is a process that is not forgiving of being placed on the back burner. Please continue to be vigilant in managing your wastes.

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