

What's That Label Doing There?

You may have noticed an uptick in the number of barcode labels appearing on door frames and similar areas. The labels are usually located near an exit sign, emergency light, or fire extinguisher.

To add a little suspense to the story, let's first give some background information: Fire code requires monthly inspection of exit signs and emergency lights. On July 1, EH&S took responsibility for inspecting those signs and lights, tasks easily integrated into our monthly fire extinguisher inspections. Our efforts resulted in a 50% cost reduction for these inspections.

Now, for the answer about the labels: The new barcodes help us efficiently associate a device with a location, document inspections, note issues requiring repair, and meet legal obligations.

Please do not move, remove, or deface the barcode labels; doing so introduces inefficiencies into the process, ultimately increasing costs. If one of our labels is in a location that you feel is not visually pleasing, or it is an area to be involved in a renovation, please contact [Tom Eadie](#) at 678-4671 to discuss options.

New Biowaste Contract Reduces Your Costs

A new contractor, MedSafe Waste, has been hired to transport and dispose of regulated medical waste. As a result of our contract, your disposal costs for a 30 gallon box of biowaste will decrease significantly.

Oregon State U. Fined \$275,000 by EPA

The EPA recently announced a settlement agreement with Oregon State University (OSU) for alleged violations of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). OSU agreed to pay a \$275,000 fine and train its employees in hazardous waste identification and management.

EPA noted that "inspectors found nearly 2,000 containers of hazardous wastes ...

that were not properly identified, managed, or safely stored, in violation of RCRA. Multiple types of hazardous wastes were found, including solvents and other flammable liquids, acids and other caustics, toxic and reactive chemicals, and used oil."

Let's continue doing a good job managing our hazardous waste and avoiding EPA fines. Contact [Erik Tyge](#) at 678-2044 for assistance and training on hazardous waste management.



Example of a barcode label applied near an exit sign

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Distractions Drive Injuries

Recent studies show that the human brain is not good at multi-tasking. When we use a cell phone while driving, walking, etc., our brains jump between tasks, diverting attention from one to the other. By texting, talking on the cell phone, etc., while in motion, you take attention away from the more important task, putting your safety and the safety of others at risk.

Check out the [TechConnect](#) article, "Blame the cellphone: Injuries pile up, from cat bites to shocks to broken bones," to see some examples of injuries blamed on cell phone use.

Limit distractions and avoid harm.

RAMP Up for Safety

The American Chemical Society recently published "[Guidelines for Chemical Laboratory Safety in Academic Institutions.](#)" The document encourages use of the RAMP concept: Recognize the hazard, Assess the risk of the hazard, Minimize the risk of the hazard, and Prepare for emergencies.

Take time to read and apply the ACS Guidelines.

Some Assembly Required

If you were required to evacuate your building, do you know where to assemble after the evacuation? If you are a supervisor or faculty member, are you prepared to account for everyone under your supervision at the time of the evacuation? If you can't answer "yes" to those questions, we encourage you to cogitate on the issue for a while.

The [Crisis Management Plan](#) lists assembly areas for UofM buildings; evacuation routes and assembly area locations are also posted inside each building.

Explosion at University of Hawaii Lab Severely Injures Researcher

Thea Elkins-Coward, a 29 year old post-doc, lost her arm and received other injuries as a result of an explosion at the University of Hawaii - Manoa.



Honolulu Fire Department photo shows damage resulting from explosion of a pressure vessel

Elkins-Coward was performing what was described as a "routine" procedure involving hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide inside a pressurized vessel (green item in photo at left).

In addition to an investigation by the Honolulu Fire Department, UH brought in independent investigators from the University of California Center for Laboratory Safety (UCCLS). The independent investigation concluded that an electrostatic discharge caused an explosion of the gas mixture; however, the report went further by stating, "...the overall underlying cause

of the accident was failure to recognize and control the hazards of an explosive gas mixture...."

Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health cited UH for multiple safety violations documented in a post-explosion investigation, imposing a \$115,500 civil penalty. As a result of UH's cooperation, the penalty was subsequently reduced to \$69,300.

Routine tasks can suddenly go awry, especially when all the hazards have not been recognized and controlled. Be sure to do a thorough hazard analysis before beginning new tasks and after modifying existing processes; then, create and follow a standard operating procedure that includes checking equipment on a daily basis.

Stormwater Information Now Online

In a cooperative effort with Physical Plant, the EH&S web site now includes a link to information on the University's stormwater program. Just in case stormwater is not part of your vocabulary, it is water that originates from precipitation. Stormwater normally soaks into the soil or flows to rivers and lakes without treatment to remove pollutants.

UofM's stormwater program goals include reducing discharge of pollutants via stormwater, protecting our water quality, and satisfying applicable requirements of the Clean Water Act.

See the web site to learn more, including how to report illicit discharges that can pollute our waters. Contact [Amelia Mayahi](#), Sustainability Manager, at 678-5543 to learn more.

Let's all do our part to eliminate discharges of pollutants via stormwater.

Likely Laboratory Acquired Infection at CDC

On March 31 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) admitted that it was "investigating how one of its laboratory workers ... may have acquired" a Salmonella infection linked to their Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2) lab duties. CDC noted that initial tests showed the strain acquired by the worker "matched the strain being worked on in the lab."

Although this is another in a series of biosafety incidents at CDC, biosafety experts are encouraged that the agency was being more transparent and had systems in place to link the illness back to the lab, investigate the causation, and initiate processes to prevent future occurrences.

For guidance on biosafety, please see the UofM [Biological Safety Manual](#) or call EH&S.

Training Options Continue to Expand

Your safety training options expanded significantly this year as a result of UofM joining a consortium of other universities with similar needs. New on-line course content acquired through the group ranges from laboratory and laser safety to powered industrial trucks and fall protection.



Physical Plant personnel prepare to enter a confined space, one of many tasks requiring training and attention to safety

The new on-line content is intended to supplement our in-person training, not replace it. In fact, EH&S is also expanding its classroom instruction to include monthly classes on many topics. This will assist in providing necessary training for new employees and those requiring refresher training. Go

to [Learning Curve](#) for the schedule and information about individual courses.

If you supervise other employees, please remember that you have a legal responsibility to ensure that they receive safety and environmental training required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The consequences of failing to ensure that people are properly trained can result in employee injuries, damage or destruction of facilities, harm to the environment, and civil and criminal liability exposure.

Contact [Ashley Koehler](#) at 678-2740 with questions about training needs and course delivery options.

Indoor Air Quality Information Online

EH&S just added an [indoor air quality page](#) to its web site. The page includes a link for reporting visible mold growth and answers your frequently asked questions about indoor air quality.

New Safety Specialist Joins EH&S

Jwyanca Chew (pronounced Ja-wan·za) recently joined EH&S as a Safety Specialist. He holds a Master of Science degree in Safety, Security, and Emergency Management. He will primarily assist departments performing maintenance and industrial type activities. [Contact Jwyanca](#) at 678-3342.



Jwyanca Chew, Safety Specialist

Scary Incidents

Texas Tech University

According to information from TTU's VP for Research, an undergraduate research student was injured on March 10 "when a glass scintillation vial exploded." The student "was collecting a dry precipitate with a metal spatula," initiating an explosion due to "unanticipated formation an explosive salt compound." Ultimately, "a transcription error from a previously published procedure" was central to formation of the explosive compound.

Following a published protocol does not relieve you of the responsibility to thoroughly review the hazards of the work – before you start the work.

Texas A&M University

Another March 10 incident involved a chemical fire in a laboratory at TAMU's Food Protein Headquarters Building on the Riverside Campus. One person received chemical burns and was taken to a hospital.

University of Wisconsin at Madison

UW-Madison was fined \$56,000 by the Federal Aviation Administration after TSA screening found that a UWM student researcher had placed hazardous material in baggage intended for a Delta Airlines flight. Among the hazards materials were flammable and corrosive chemicals.

Don't transport hazardous chemicals unless you are trained and certified to do so.

"Urine for a Surprise"

The Guardian recently published an article about negative impacts of poor swimming pool hygiene.

The article stated, "Do you love the smell of a chlorinated pool in the summertime? Unfortunately, urine for a surprise." Several other media sources contained similar articles noting a newly released video from the American Chemical Society (ACS).

Chemists used their scientific Jedi powers to show that the "chlorine" odor is actually a disinfection byproduct resulting from the reaction of pool chemicals with chemicals in urine and other organic matter that we put into the water. Besides the "yuck" factor, many of those disinfection byproducts are harmful; at the very least, they can irritate the skin, eyes, and respiratory system – especially for those who spend many hours in the pool on a regular basis. [See the ACS Video](#) to learn more.

Help minimize disinfection byproducts by showering before swimming, and don't do "that" in the pool.

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