

## In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – January 13, 2021

1. NEW SOP: Biological Material Research Compliance and IBC Oversight
  2. Safe Snow Shoveling & Snow Blowing
  3. Safety Shorts – Snow Shoveling/Snow Blower Safety
  4. Safety Posters – Navigating Wintertime Surfaces
  5. Situational Preparedness – Overcome Distracted Driving
  6. Heads Up!
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### 1. NEW SOP: Biological Material Research Compliance and IBC Oversight

Environmental Health and Safety has developed a new SOP that serves as an overview of the compliance requirements at UNL for research with biological materials that are described in detail in the UNL Biosafety Guidelines. This document is an ideal primer for new faculty and researchers to learn about which biological materials require approval from the IBC (and potentially other committees) at UNL. The document also provides basic information about IBC protocol review, pre-approval laboratory safety surveys, safety training requirements, post-approval monitoring and non-compliance with UNL Biosafety Guidelines. The material in this SOP is also available on the IBC website at <http://ehs.unl.edu/committees/ibc/>.

#### Resources

- EHS Safe Operating Procedure **Biological Material Research Compliance and IBC Oversight** [https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-material\\_res\\_comp\\_%26\\_IBC\\_oversight.pdf](https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-material_res_comp_%26_IBC_oversight.pdf)

### 2. Safe Snow Shoveling & Snow Blowing

Snow shoveling and use of a snow blower present a number of hazards. Here are some tips to help keep you safe while shoveling snow.

#### Preparation:

- **Dress appropriately.** Wear water-repellent clothing, layered to allow removal of a layer to prevent overheating. Cover your head, hands, and feet with weather-appropriate gear. Wear shoes/boots with slip-resistant soles.
- **Timing matters.** Start snow removal when there is a light covering and repeat. Do not wait for the snow to stop/accumulate. Do not plan to shovel immediately after eating and avoid caffeine before beginning.

- **Clear vision is important.** Be sure your cold weather clothing does not obstruct your vision so you can watch for icy spots/uneven surfaces. Maintain awareness of your surroundings so you do not inadvertently find yourself in a traffic path as vehicles may not have good traction on the snow/ice.
- **Prepare yourself.** Shoveling snow can raise your heart rate and blood pressure. Warm up before shoveling, stretching as you would for any workout. Walking a few minutes or marching in place is one suggestion for a ‘warm-up.’ Cold, tight muscles are more likely to result in a sprain or strain. If you have a history of heart or other medical problems or do not exercise regularly, check with your doctor before shoveling.

While shoveling:

- **Pace yourself.** Snow shoveling is an aerobic activity. Take frequent breaks and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. STOP shoveling immediately if you experience pain or difficulty breathing or become fatigued.
- **Use proper equipment.** Use a shovel comfortable for your height and strength. Sometimes a smaller blade is better as it avoids the risk of trying to pick up too much snow at once.
- **Use proper technique.** When gripping the shovel position your hands 12 inches apart. This increases leverage and reduces the strain on your body. If possible, push the snow rather than lift to avoid back strain.
- **Push the snow, if possible. Lift only when necessary. If you must lift, lift properly.**
  - Lift with your legs and tighten your stomach muscles.
  - Keep your back straight and do not bend at the waist.
  - Scoop small amounts and walk to where you want to dump the snow.
  - Never remove deep snow all at once, rather shovel an inch or two and repeat.
  - Do not twist your body to shovel or empty the load. Never throw snow over your shoulder.

If possible, use a snow blower instead of shoveling by hand. However, recognize that a snow blower presents unique hazards. These are a few tips to help prevent injury:

- **Never wear loose pants, jackets, or scarves.** Loose clothing can become entangled in moving parts and pull you in with them.
- **Operate snow blowers only when there is good visibility.**
- **NEVER stick your hands in the snow blower!** To resolve jams, shut-off the engine and wait more than five seconds to ensure all moving parts are still. Use a solid object to clear the chute.
- **Do not leave the snow blower unattended.** Shut off the engine if you must walk away.

- **Add fuel before starting the machine, never while the engine is running or hot.** Be sure to fuel the snow blower outside not in a garage, shed or another enclosed area. Do not operate in an enclosed area to avoid being overcome by engine fumes (carbon monoxide).
- **Avoid the engine.** The engine becomes hot during use and can burn unprotected flesh.
- **Use the pull-cord safely.** Hold cord firmly, stand with feet wide apart. Do not force cord if it does not move freely. Sharply pulling can cause upper body/back injury.
- **Watch the power cord.** For electric snow blowers, remain aware of power cord location. Entangled/severed power cords can lead to shock or electrocution.
- **Do not remove safety devices and keep hands and feet away from moving parts.** Safety devices, shields, guards, and interlocks are there for operator protection.
- **Watch out for motor recoil.** After the machine is turned off there is a brief recoil of motor and blades.
- **Keep others away, including children.** Snow blowers can pick up and shoot objects such as rocks and other debris with significant force. Take care to properly position the discharge chute.
- **Wear earplugs.** Gas-powered models typically run about 85 decibels so protect your hearing.
- **Wear goggles.** Protect your eyes from small stones or other items that can be thrown up by a snow blower.
- **Understand the machine.** Read the instruction manual prior to use and be familiar with all features. Do not attempt to operate, repair, or maintain the snow blower without reading the instruction manual.

## Resources

- National Safety Council “*Why do People Die Shoveling Snow?*”  
<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/winter/snow-shoveling>
- American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons “*Orthoinfo: Prevent Snow Shoveling and Snowblowing Injuries*”  
<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00060>
- Consumer Reports “*Commensense tips for safer snow blowing*”  
<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2013/12/common-sense-tips-for-safer-snow-blowing/index.htm>
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety “*Landscaping – Snow Blower*”  
[https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety\\_haz/landscaping/snow\\_throwers.html](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/landscaping/snow_throwers.html)

- OSHA Winter Weather Hazards/Precautions  
[https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter\\_weather/hazards\\_precautions.html](https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/hazards_precautions.html)
- OSHA Protecting Workers from Cold Stress  
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3156.pdf>

### 3. Safety Shorts – Snow Blower & Snow Shoveling Safety

This series features links to short safety resource(s) each month. Provided this month are resources related to snow shoveling safety.

- **Snow Shoveling Safety** (Cleveland Clinic, 2:06 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IMXSElabMM>
- **Easy Snow Shoveling Techniques – LSTraining.com** (LS Training System, 2:26 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX6uaTivlcQ>
- **Snowblower Safety** (Grabow Hand to Shoulder Center, 2.47 minutes) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G00z3F\\_lmeY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G00z3F_lmeY)
- **Snow Blower Safety Tips** (Toro, 3:14 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLp75kUdRDw>

NOTE: Resources are provided for informational purposes only. Publication does not in any way endorse a particular company or product or affect current UNL policies and procedures.

### 4. Safety Posters – Navigating Wintertime Surfaces

EHS has developed a number of safety posters of relevance to the campus community. During the winter season quite a number of injury incidents at UNL are related to Slip, Trips and Falls on ice and snow. Here are three posters that provide tips for safe navigation of three areas workers traverse daily.



If you would like hard copies of the above posters for your work area, contact [ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu) or 402.472.4925 with your name, campus mailing address including Zip+4, and quantity desired. We can also furnish an electronic version to distribute through your department/area listserv/electronic communication.

Review the entire list of safety posters. Are there others you would like?

## Resources

- Safety Posters <https://ehs.unl.edu/safety-posters>

## 5. Situational Preparedness – Overcome Distracted Driving

Situational preparedness is so important that we will be looking at various aspects over time, as well as providing resources to assist you to “be prepared” for whatever situations you may encounter at UNL. Distracted driving remains one of the primary causes of injury incidents.

Talking, using your phone, adjusting the radio, applying makeup, eating or drinking can all distract you from the essential task of safe driving. The deadly and often illegal temptation of texting is the most common form of distracted driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has identified three distinct types of distraction. Texting provides distraction of all three types:

- Visual (taking your eyes off the road)
- Manual (taking your hands off the wheel)
- Cognitive (taking your mind off driving)

Thousands of people are killed or injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers and the numbers are going up every year. Under the best of circumstances, most drivers are distracted in one way or another, usually cognitively, listening to the radio, talking with others, or just thinking. Cell phones

are especially problematic as they combine more than one type of distraction. Distracted driving endangers not only the driver, but also their passengers, and all other road users.

The first step to safety is to make a commitment to stay off your phone while you are driving and not even use hands-free electronics. If you need to use a phone, ask a passenger to assist or pull off the road. Plan your route ahead of time, but if you need to consult a map, pull over to turn on the app or ask a passenger to assist. Using a phone while driving is never OK, not even “for a second.”

The second step is to Install an anti-distracted-driving app. DMV.ORG states that every day 9 people die because of distracted driving! Be part of the solution, not a statistic. Go to Google Play Store/iPhone App Store to review apps available for your device. Downloading a safe driving app is a big step towards driving without distraction. These apps inactivate your phone while driving. Be sure to set up the app before driving.

Lastly, change your vocabulary. The term “accident” makes the narrative car versus car or car versus pedestrian which may sound minor. The word “crash” is more accurate! In the last seven years 9% of fatal crashes involved distracted drivers.

If you are still not convinced, watch the video NHTSA Video “U DRIVE. U TEXT. U PAY.” Then pledge to:

- Protect lives by never texting or talking on the phone while driving.
- Be a good passenger and speak out if the driver is distracted.
- Encourage friends and family to drive phone-free.

## Resources

- NHTSA (National Highway Transportation Safety Association) “U DRIVE. U TEXT. U PAY.” <https://www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving>
- DMV.ORG “Apps to Fight Distracted Driving” <https://www.dmv.org/distracted-driving-apps.php>
- Why cell phones are a distraction – Distracted Driving video (NatlSafetyCouncil, duration 1.31 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8UPLKhN-oA>
- Distracted Driving: Calls Kill video (NatlSafetyCouncil. Duration 1.00 minute) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UFB7CbYtKA>
- Dramatic Texting and Driving PSA video (WJBF, Duration 1:00 minute) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7ljxDjwDjU>

## 6. Heads Up!

The Chancellor's University Safety Committee, among other initiatives and duties, promotes safe walking, driving and bicycling on and around all UNL campuses. Toward that goal, published on the EHS website there are graphics and other resources for you to use in your area to promote these concepts and reduce the likelihood of accidents such as have occurred on other college and university campuses. Review the graphics and other materials available online and share with your co-workers and safety committees!

### Resources

- Heads Up! Marketing Materials <https://ehs.unl.edu/heads-up-marketing-materials>

## Remember...SAFETY IS AN ATTITUDE!

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