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1. Innovation in Biosafety and Biosecurity

October is Biosafety and Biosecurity Month and ABSA International, the Association for Biosafety and Biosecurity, is promoting **Innovation in Biosafety and Biosecurity** as the theme this year. EHS has created innovation in our Biosafety program over the past few years. Some of the ways we have been innovative include the following:

- **Creation of a post-approval monitoring program for Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) protocols for research with biological materials.**
 - This program involves brief periodic visits with faculty who have active IBC protocols to foster relationships and keep up with changing research to ensure compliance with the UNL Biosafety Guidelines.
 - This program has reduced the number of non-compliance incidents reported to NIH by 40% since program implementation in April 2018.
- **Production of two safety videos as a supplement to available online training modules.**
 - Biosafety Cabinets (viewed 108 times since 5/31/2019)
 - Autoclave Operation and Performance Testing (viewed 578 times since 9/26/19)
- **Implementation of a training outreach program to provide on-demand hands-on training on various biosafety topics.**
 - Topics available include Biosafety Cabinet Operations, Spill Clean-up Procedures, Proper Donning and Doffing of PPE, Bloodborne Pathogens Program Training

- Other topics may be available upon request.

You can learn more about these programs or access the resources at the links below.

- <https://ehs.unl.edu/committees/ibc/protocol-development>
- https://go.unl.edu/ehs_in-person_training
- <https://ehs.unl.edu/video-resources>

2. Landscaping Tips for Improving Local Water Quality

Yard waste and litter that enter storm sewer inlets clog systems and degrade water quality in local lakes and streams. You can help mitigate blockages and downstream water quality impairments by doing your part to prevent pollution from entering storm sewer drains. Following are tips to help protect water quality while keeping your yard maintained.

- Remove grass clippings and leaves from paved surfaces by dry methods such as sweeping or blowing clippings back to the lawn.
- Consider improving the health of your lawn by mulch mowing.
- If grass clippings are bagged, consider mixing grass clippings with leaves and soil to create a backyard compost pile.
- Fertilize only when necessary and at the right concentration for the lawn. Sweep and remove fertilizer from paved surfaces and curbs.
- Clean up after your pets and dispose of pet waste in the trash.
- Place litter in a closed trash container to prevent it from entering the storm drain.

Everyone can do their part by following these tips to help improve water quality in local lakes and streams. For more information regarding UNL's stormwater best management practices or to report a water quality concern on City or East Campus please visit <https://ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-management-unl>.

3. In the Spotlight

Check out the EHS "Spotlight," feature on the EHS home page (<https://ehs.unl.edu/>) and meet EHS staff Justus Foged and John Lohmeier.

Over time this “spotlight” will also highlight selected seasonal safety topics. The Spotlight may be found immediately below the listing of EHS program areas and to the left of the “Report an Accident or Near-Miss” black box. The Spotlight is updated every 2-4 weeks so visit often.

4. Situational Preparedness – Cell Phone Dangers

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 while driving, bicycling, walking or using scooters, skateboards and other such equipment.

Smartphones make it easy to stay connected at all times. But “staying connected” while driving can be deadly. Using a cell phone while driving, hands-free or not, increases the chances of a crash fourfold. Texting while driving is six times more likely to cause an accident than driving drunk!

Driver distractions fall into three categories: visual, manual, and cognitive. Cellphone use while driving provides distraction in all three categories. Here are some tips for staying safe:

- Turn off cell phones when driving or better yet put them in the trunk or otherwise out of reach. Switch your cell phone to “Do Not Disturb.” Use an app or record a voicemail that says you are driving and will return calls when you reach your destination.
- Do not make or answer calls, even hands free. If you must take a call, pull off the road into a safe area.
- Do not send or review texts or emails, even at a stop light as your focus must be on driving at all times you are on the road.
- Program your navigation system prior to starting the vehicle. Enable verbal directions so GPS can verbally provide you directions. Don’t take your eyes off the road to look at the navigation map. Pull off the road into a safe area if you must change/look at the navigation map.

Resources

- Safety+Health Magazine. (2021, April 20). *Avoid cellphone distractions while driving*. Safety+Health Magazine. Retrieved September 27, 2021, from https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/21024-avoid-cellphone-distractions-while-driving?utm_source=april1st&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=inThisIssue

- *Texting and driving accident statistics - distracted driving.* edgarsnyder.com. (2019, August 8). Retrieved September 27, 2021, from <https://www.edgarsnyder.com/car-accident/cause-of-accident/cell-phone/cell-phone-statistics.html>
- General Health & Wellness. (2020, June 24). *Cell phones: The most dangerous thing on the road.* Franciscan Health. Retrieved September 27, 2021, from <https://www.franciscanhealth.org/community/blog/cell-phones-the-most-dangerous-thing-on-the-road>

5. Harvest Time = Hazard Time

Agriculture is among the most hazardous industries according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Harvest is an intense time due to the quantity of work to be accomplished and the time frame in which it must be done. That urgency, often leading to fatigue and inattentiveness, can result in an increased incidence of injury. Maintaining awareness of and avoiding potential hazards is key to avoiding injury. Here are a few harvest time safety tips:

- Read operator manuals prior to equipment use and be sure all operators are familiar with and properly trained in safe use of equipment.
- Install and use safety devices such as Slow-Moving Vehicle signs and seat belts. Have roll-over-protective devices fitted on tractors.
- Keep all equipment/machinery guards in place. Wait until all mechanisms have stopped moving and have been secured from restarting before attempting to service/unclog.
- Take breaks and get enough sleep. Fatigue, stress, medication, alcohol, and drugs cause lack of focus on tasks. Stay hydrated to maintain awareness.
- To reduce fall hazards, use grab bars when mounting and dismounting machinery, and wear non-slip footwear.

Working safely helps avoid injuries so you can get the job done.

Resources

- EHS **Ag Safety** SOPs <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/ag-safety>
 - **Harvest Safety** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-harvest_safety.pdf
 - **Tractor Safety** <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-tractor.pdf>
- 10 Harvest Safety Tips to Prevent Accidents On The Farm (with links to a number of farm safety resources) <https://www.ruralmutual.com/resource/farm/harvest-safety-tips/>

- Your Harvest Safety Checklist <https://www.cenex.com/about/cenex-information/cenexperts-blog-page/safety-tips/Harvest-Safety-Checklist>
- Mihalovic-Bayer, Dawn. "Harvest safety tips for farmers." *Mayo Clinic Health System*, 18 Sept. 2015, <https://mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/harvest-safety-tips-for-farmers>
- OSHA Quick Card "Protecting Farmworkers from Tractor and Harvester Hazards" (English/Spanish) <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3706.pdf>
- OSHA Quick Card "Backing Up Farm Vehicles and Equipment Safety" (English/Spanish) <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3733.pdf>

6. Eye Injury Prevention Month (October 1 – 31)

While October is recognized in the United States as Eye Injury Prevention Month, protecting your eyes from potential hazards should occur year around. According to the Prevent Blindness organization, more than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day. Up to 20 percent of work-related eye injuries cause temporary or permanent vision loss. The good news is that 90 percent of eye injuries are preventable with use of appropriate safety eyewear. Review the Prevent Blindness Workplace Safety Quiz and answers to see if you know as much about eye injury prevention as you think you do!

Worker eye injuries happen three major ways:

- Striking or scraping: The majority of eye injuries are the result of small particles or objects striking or scraping the eye.
- Penetration: Objects that go through the eyeball and result in permanent vision loss.
- Chemical and thermal burns: Chemicals such as those used in research, cleaning or maintenance activities are common causes of chemical burns to one or both eyes. Thermal burns can occur to welders.

Selection of the appropriate safety eyewear must consider the hazards present (e.g., impact, dust, chemical, optical radiation, heat). General tips to promote eye safety include:

- Safety eyewear must be marked with "ANSI Z87" and worn at all times whenever eye hazards are present.
- Workers should know where the nearest eyewash station is at their job site and how to use it.

- The correct style of safety eyewear is based on the hazards present and anticipated tasks. For example, goggles are needed when there is risk of chemical splash to the eyes. Safety glasses are not an appropriate choice for this type of hazard.
- Employees should have regular eye exams to make sure their vision is adequate to do their jobs safely.
- Standard prescription eyewear is not a substitute for safety eyewear. However, prescription eyewear can be designed to also serve as safety eyewear. Consult your supervisor if you have a need for prescription safety eyewear.

Protect your eyes...you only get one set!

Resources

- Prevent Blindness America “Workplace Safety Quiz”
http://preventblindness.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/MK32_WorkSafetyQuiz_1.pdf
- EHS SOP Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Eyes and Face
https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-PPE_eyes-face.pdf
- American Academy of Ophthalmology “Eye Injury Prevention”
<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/preventing-injuries>
- American Academy of Ophthalmology “Safety Glasses and Protective Eyewear” <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/injuries-protective-eyewear>
- Occupational Health & Safety “Tips: Workplace Eye Safety”
<https://ohsonline.com/articles/2008/03/tips-workplace-eye-safety.aspx>
- ALL ABOUT VISION “Eye safety basics”
<https://www.allaboutvision.com/safety/eye-safety-basics.htm>

7. EHS Needs Your Feedback

Environmental Health and Safety is committed to excellent customer service. Toward that goal, EHS needs your feedback. Please complete a *Customer Satisfaction Survey* and provide feedback on our services and staff. By taking a few moments to complete the survey (<http://ehs.unl.edu/survey>), you will be helping us to identify areas where we might need to focus our attention.

In order to effectively evaluate potential areas for improvement, please provide specific information or examples and your name and contact information. We greatly appreciate your participation.

Please feel free to contact Brenda Osthus, EHS Director, at 402.472.4927 or bosthus1@unl.edu if you would rather communicate outside the parameters of this survey.

8. Revised Safe Operating Procedure

➤ Autoclave Operation and Use

<https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-autoclavesafety.pdf>

Revised to explicitly list periodic verification testing with a biological indicator as a normal part of autoclave operation. Clarification has been added about the location of autoclave tape on biohazard bags and sharps containers. Instructions have been added about requesting a biological indicator vial from EHS to verify proper autoclave operation after repairs have been completed on an autoclave that has malfunctioned.

THINK SAFETY – DON'T LEARN BY ACCIDENT!

Environmental Health and Safety

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

3630 East Campus Loop

Lincoln, NE 68583-0824

(402) 472-4925

<http://ehs.unl.edu>

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