In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – June 12, 2024

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1. Drowsy Driving Kills

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, in research over a recent five-year period, estimated that drowsy drivers were involved in 18% of all fatal crashes. Data reviewed was from 2017-2021 in-depth investigations that encompassed more than 229,000 drivers of passenger vehicles involved in over 163,000 unique crashes. Findings included:

- Men ages 21-34 made up the largest number of drowsy drivers in the crashes.
- Most of the crashes occurred on rural or urban arterial roads, between 11 p.m. and 2:59 a.m., and involved a vehicle driving off the road.
- Drivers who crashed between 3:00 and 6:59 a.m. were most likely to be drowsy.

Symptoms of being too tired to drive include:

- Frequent yawning or difficulty keeping your eyes open.
- Nodding off or having trouble keeping your head up.
- Inability to remember driving the last few miles.
- Missing road signs or turns.
- Difficulty maintaining your speed.
- Drifting out of your lane.

Plan to ensure you are rested before driving, in particular if planning a longer drive or you regularly travel outside the city limits. If you are experiencing any of the above, pull over in a safe area until rested.

Maintain self-awareness when driving. Don’t become a statistic!

Resources

- Study links drowsy driving to nearly 30,000 deaths over 5 years. (2024, May 1). *Safety+Health*. https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/25386-study-links-drowsy-driving-to-nearly-30-000-deaths-over-5-years?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mbrnewsalertmay3&utm_content=
- NSC: Drivers are Falling Asleep Behind the Wheel https://www.nsc.org/road/safety-topics/fatigued-driver

2. Minimize Harmful Insect Encounters

As spring transitions to summer, alternating wet and hot weather leads to standing water, which is a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes, ticks, fleas and other insects. With an increase in ticks and flying insect populations comes an increased risk of contracting diseases that these insects can carry.

Mosquito or tick bites can transmit vector-borne diseases such as West Nile (mosquitoes), Lyme disease (ticks), Alpha-gal Syndrome (Red Meat Allergy, ticks) and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (ticks).

Many of these vectors are bloodsucking insects, which ingest disease-producing microorganisms during a blood meal from an infected host (human or animal) and later spread it to a new host during a subsequent blood meal. According to the Centers for Disease Control, vector-borne diseases (VBD) have increased threefold in the United States between 2004 and 2016. Increases are driven by changing land use patterns, global travel, and climate change.

To avoid "getting bit," follow these prevention tips:

- **Apply lotion, liquid, or spray repellent** to exposed skin. Insect repellent is the BEST way to protect against insect bites—even children and pregnant women should protect themselves. It is best to use an EPA-registered insect repellent and the EPA has developed a web selection tool (https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you). Below are some of the common active ingredients in repellents.

    - DEET. (CDC recommends products with 20%-30% DEET). NOTE: Concentrations of DEET > 30% do not provide greater protection and products with higher levels are unnecessary.
    - Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin).
    - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD). Do not use these products on children under 3 years old.
    - IR3535.
    - 2-undecanone.
- **Cover up**. Wear a long-sleeved shirt, socks, and pants.
- **Thoroughly check** skin and clothing frequently for ticks.
- **Keep mosquitoes outside**. Use air conditioning or make sure that you repair and use window/door screens.
- **Avoid areas** prone to insect infestation and take action to eliminate or treat potential breeding grounds.
    - Mosquitoes breed in stagnant (still) water so areas with lakes and ponds are prone to large populations. Empty containers in your yard that may collect water from rain regularly to eliminate breeding grounds.
    - Ticks live in brushy, wooded, or grassy areas. Wear long pants, tucked into white socks for quick detection and removal. Avoid brushy, wooded, or tall grassy areas and walk in the center of trails.

Optimizing protection against mosquito and tick bites:

- Always follow the product label instructions.

- Treat clothing with products containing permethrin (0.5%) or purchase pretreated clothing.
    - Permethrin-treated clothing will retain repellent activity through multiple washes. Examples include Sawyer Clothing & Gear, Repel Clothing and Gear
    - Repellents intended for use on skin can also be applied to clothing but may provide a shorter duration of protection compared to permethrin-treated clothes and the repellent must be reapplied after laundering.
- Use repellent when around mosquitoes, they can bite any time of day or night.
- Reapply insect repellent as directed. If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.

Tick Detection and Removal

- Check yourself during and after outdoor activity (your entire body); remove any attached ticks promptly. Check your gear.
- Check your pets as ticks can “hitchhike” into your house on pet fur.
- Check your clothing for ticks. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing.
- Showering within 2 hours of coming indoors can remove unattached ticks.
- Remove embedded ticks as soon as possible using fine-tipped tweezers, grasping the tick close to the skin's surface, and pulling straight out. If the mouthparts break off and remain in the skin, try to remove them with the tweezers.
    - If you are unable to remove the mouth parts easily, leave them alone and let the skin heal. After removing the tick, clean the bite area and your hands with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.
    - Removed ticks may be disposed of by flushing down the toilet. If you would like to bring the tick to your healthcare provider for identification, put it in rubbing alcohol or place it in a sealed bag/container. More information is available in the **CDC Tick Bite: What to Do Fact Sheet** (https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/pdfs/FS_TickBite-508.pdf)

Watch for symptoms for 30 days.

- Many Vector-borne diseases (VBD) cause symptoms which resemble cold and flu symptoms and may include:
    - Rash
    - Fever
    - Fatigue
    - Headache
    - Muscle pain
    - Joint swelling and pain

Researchers traveling to other countries/parts of the United States to conduct research activities should review the prevalence of VBD when reviewing other local safety considerations.

Tick Tag Go

Help collect data on tick distributions in Nebraska by sharing observations. Learn more and find additional resources about tick bite prevention at https://nebraskaonehealth.unl.edu/tick-tag-go/prevention.

Resources

- Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services (NeDHHS) (phone: 402-471-3121)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – Division of Vector-Borne Diseases https://www.cdc.gov/vector-borne-diseases/php/data-research/national-strategy/index.html
- CDC Symptoms of Tickborne Illness: https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/symptoms.html
- NIOSH Insect Repellent Safety https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/mosquito-borne/repellents.html
- NIOSH Lyme Disease: Recommendation for Employers (and Employees) https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lyme/recommendations.html
- NIOSH Tick-Borne Diseases https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/tick-borne/
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services WNV (West Nile Virus) Surveillance http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/West-Nile-Virus-Data.aspx
- DHHS Tick-borne Diseases in Nebraska News Release (5/27/21) https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Tis-the-Season-for-Tick-borne-Diseases-in-Nebraska.aspx
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services General Information on WNV http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/West-Nile-Virus.aspx
- CDC Zika Virus Information https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html

3. Avoid Slips, Trips and Falls

The most common types of injury at UNL are due to slips, trips and/or falls. Same-level slips, trips, and falls are occupational hazards that can be found in every type of work setting. According to the Bureau of Labor

Statistics, the majority of fall-related injuries occur as a result of falls from same-level walking surfaces, not from a height.

The Department of Labor also reports that slips, trips and falls account for the majority of general industrial accidents accounting for 15% of all accidental deaths a year and 25% of all reported injury claims a year.

Safety professionals today believe that human factors play a key role in these incidents. Workers fail to identify the risk of a slip, trip, or fall hazard, wear inappropriate shoes, do not pay attention to their surroundings, and even text or view media while walking.

Review these common causes of slips, trips and fall to become aware so you can identify, reduce and prepare for these conditions:

- Wet of greasy floors
- Dry floors with wood dust or powder
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Loose flooring, carpeting or mats
- Transition from one floor type to another
- Missing or uneven floor tiles and bricks
- Damaged or irregular steps; no handrails
- Sloped walking surfaces
- Shoes with wet, muddy, greasy or oily soles
- Clutter
- Electrical cords or cables
- Open desk or file cabinets
- Damaged ladder steps
- Ramps and gang planks without skid-resistant surfaces
- Metal surfaces – dock plates
- Weather hazards – rain, sleet, ice, snow, hail, frost

Tips for reducing slips, trips and/or falls:

- Poorly lit areas make spotting obstacles in your path difficult. Create and maintain proper lighting. Inform your supervisors if your work area has burnt out lights. Notify Facilities Service Desk if there are burnt out lights around campus. Travel, if possible, on better lighted paths.
- Wear footwear appropriate to the task and surface conditions.

- Keep your mind on the task. While perhaps the most difficult to implement, this is the most important tip. Keep focused on the task at hand and maintain situational awareness to prevent not only slips, trips and falls but also other workplace injury incidents.

Adopt safety as your attitude so you don't "learn by accident"!

Resources

- SAFESTART "Solving slips, trips and falls once and for all" https://safestart.com/file/7fya95/
- Department of Labor. (2024). Weekly safety briefings. In *Weekly Safety Briefings*. https://workplacelearningsystem.com/uploads/PDFs/Week4SafetyTopics-AvoidingSlipsTripsandFalls.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Weekly%20Safety%20Briefing%20%20Jan%202024%20%20Week%204&utm_content=Weekly%20Safety%20Briefing%20%20Jan%202024%20%20Week%204+CID_b08a8a6b44c602d217be595d3ee56b6d&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Download%20Safety%20Topics%20Handout%20PDF

4. "Can-do" = Near Miss

A worker informed EHS that they received a report of a burned-out light bulb in a co-worker's office, and since the worker could reach light fixtures without a ladder, they decided to take five minutes and change the bulb for the co-worker. However, when the worker removed the old bulb from the tombstone socket, the bulb broke! The worker did not sustain an injury from the broken bulb but easily might have. The worker who decided to change out a light bulb in the workplace self-reported this Near Miss, indicating their "can-do" mindset perhaps is not in the best interest of safety.

As this bulb broke, the worker's mind immediately went to their lack of proper eyewear to protect against broken glass and their lack of cut-resistant gloves to protect their hands from potential cuts. As this worker did, we all sometimes fall into what might be called the "Can-do attitude trap." This is a safety trap in which we think we can complete a relatively simple or routine task quickly without considering the potential negative outcomes associated with it. This task had no time constraints, and it could

have waited for the worker to put on the proper PPE to perform this task safely.

Furthermore, ALL tasks can wait for us to think about any potential associated hazards. If you think that time is of the essence for task completion, ask yourself what happens when you get injured performing the task and can't complete it at all.

Please be safe while working on campus and at home. When the "can-do" thoughts kick in, think again before you act!

Resources

- Near Miss Reporting https://ehs.unl.edu/near-missclose-call-incident-reporting-form

5. Updated Safe Operating Procedures

The following SOPs have been updated due to revised guidelines. Links within SOPs updated as necessary.

- **Cleaning up Spills of Bloodborne Pathogens** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-cleanbbp.pdf
- **Handling Laundry Potentially Contaminated With Bloodborne Pathogens** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-laundry.pdf
- **HIV and HBV Research Laboratories** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-hivresearch_1.PDF
- **Security Advice for Biological Research Facilities** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-security_features.pdf
- **Select Agents and Toxins** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-select_agents.pdf
- **Select Agents and Toxins – Clinical and/or Diagnostic Laboratory Activities** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-select_agents_clinical_diagnostic_lab_activities.pdf
- **Sharps – Handling and Disposing** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-sharps-handling_disposing.pdf

- **Spill and Exposure Response for Biohazardous Materials** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-spill_%26_exposure_response.pdf

- **Transport of Biohazardous Materials at UNL (Including Research and Clinical Specimens/ Materials)** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-transport_biohaz_materials.pdf

- **Working in a Biosafety Cabinet** https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-working_bio_cabinet.pdf

ADOPT SAFETY AS YOUR ATTITUDE – DON'T LEARN BY ACCIDENT!

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