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### 1. Distracted Driving Awareness This Month

April is national Distracted Driving Awareness Month and a good time to regroup and take responsibility for your choices made on the road. According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,142 lives were lost in 2020 due to distracted driving.

The Nebraska Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Office used new digital technology to measure the number of distracted drivers in Nebraska recently. Recent results showed that 1 in 10 drivers you meet on the road are not looking where they are driving, but instead are focusing on a cellphone or other distraction! This figure is up 7% from that of a 2021 NHTSA study.

Tips to Avoid Distracted Driving:

- **Before you start your trip, get comfortable.** Adjust your seat and mirrors and set you navigation system before operating the vehicle.
- **Put your cell phone out of sight to prevent temptation.** Use your cell phone for emergency situations only. Pull off the road and stop to call or text. Handsfree use is a distraction too.
- **If you are drowsy, pull off the road.**
- **You should limit the number of passengers, as well as the level of activity inside the car.** Ask passengers to help navigate, change the radio station, make a call or send a message. Pull over to address situations involving children in the car.
- **Secure your pets as unsecured pets can be a distraction.**
- **Make sure possessions in your car are secured.** It can be tempting to reach for items such as bags or water bottles if they are rolling around on the floor.
- **Avoid activities such as shaving or putting on makeup and eating while driving.** Do these tasks before starting out or wait until you have reached your destination.
- **Do your multi-tasking outside the car.**

Don't think you are distracted? Here are some signs of distracted driving:

- Nearly striking an object, vehicle or pedestrian
- Failure to safely maintain lane control
- Driving into opposing lane, crossing center line
- Slow response to traffic signals

With traffic fatalities in Nebraska at a 15-year high, all drivers need to do everything possible to avoid crashes. Keep your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your attention 100% on the task of driving. Driving is a full-time task, so save the distractions for when you arrive safely at your destination.

## Resources

- NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION. (2023, March 24). *Data shows that 10% of drivers are distracted*. JournalStar.com. [https://journalstar.com/niche/neighborhood-extra/data-shows-that-10-of-drivers-are-distracted/article\\_f2dd69ab-5601-5f35-b9c6-d94592f3071c.html](https://journalstar.com/niche/neighborhood-extra/data-shows-that-10-of-drivers-are-distracted/article_f2dd69ab-5601-5f35-b9c6-d94592f3071c.html)
- *How Much Do You Really Know About Distracted Driving?* (n.d.). <https://living.acg.aaa.com/auto/top-driving-distractions>
- *Surprising Distractions*. March/April/May 2023 AAA Living magazine.
- *Distracted Driving*. (n.d.). Nebraska Department of Transportation. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://dot.nebraska.gov/safety/driving/distracted/>
- *Distracted to Death – Safety Training Video – Avoid Accidents Reduce Distractions* (Safety Memos, Duration 1:43 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKI3s-A3-Ks>

## 2. Severe Weather is Coming

Severe weather can happen anytime, in any part of the country. Whether you work on campus or in the field, do you know what to do in the event of severe weather? Unless you've recently taken the EHS web-based **Emergency Preparedness** training, now would be a good time to review that online module and related resources including the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website and the resources provided there.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Weather Service, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration have a number of useful resources covering a variety of weather hazards. Here are short reminders from Ready.gov about how to deal with a number of natural disasters:

- **Lightning.** Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. When thunder roars, go indoors!
- **Tornados.** Tornados can happen anytime anywhere and increasingly are common any time of the year. When a warning is issued you need to

- take shelter immediately. Always be aware of the location of the nearest tornado shelter.
- **Flooding.** Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States. Do not try to walk, swim or drive through flood waters. Turn Around, Don't Drown!
  - **Earthquake.** Injuries usually result from falling debris. When the earth shakes, drop, cover and hold on.

A number of areas across the university have established Emergency Action Plans. Does your building have one? If not, now would be a good time to set one up. You can download a template from the university's SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website. Assistance/consultation regarding completion is only an email away, by contacting [preparedness@unl.edu](mailto:preparedness@unl.edu). If your area does have an Emergency Action Plan, review it now to be sure you are familiar with the components.

The EHS Safe Operating Procedure **Communication of Work Area Safety Information** contains a checklist with various items including a section on "Emergency Preparedness." The checklist assists both workers and supervisors by identifying relevant action items for new/current workers.

Review the resources listed for more in-depth guidance on preparing for and responding to various types of severe weather.

## Resources

- EHS web-based Emergency Preparedness training <https://ehs.unl.edu/web-based-training#EP>
- SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website <https://safety.unl.edu/>
- Ready "It's Not Luck" <https://www.ready.gov/>
- Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills <https://www.shakeout.org/dropcoverholdon>
- National Weather Service Lightning Safety Tips and Resources <https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning>
- OSHA Factsheet "Lightning Safety When Working Outdoors" <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3863.pdf>
- NOAA "The Online Tornado FAQ" <https://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/>
- EHS Safe Operating Procedure Communication of Work Area Safety Information <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-workareasafety.pdf>

## 3. Safety Tips – Driving & Dodging Disaster

The following videos provide safety tips on driving in severe conditions as well as general information on staying safe in severe weather.

- Disaster Dodgers: Severe Weather (FEMA, Duration 7:22 min)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXw1feTnkU4&t=149s>
- 8 Driving Tips to Driving in Fog, Rain, or a Storm (BRIGHT SIDE, Duration 8:41 min)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GEqB-xui0M&t=206s>
- Tornadoes: 4 Safe Areas -Severe Weather Safety – Safety Training Video (Safety Memos, Duration 2:45 min)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe0wlt6KpUQ>
- Really Obvious UNL Emergency Preparedness (various)  
[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=really+obvious+unl+emergency+preparedness](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=really+obvious+unl+emergency+preparedness)

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. Safe Use of Sharps

There recently have been near misses involving sharps. Sharps are items that can easily puncture the skin. Two near misses were related to needlesticks while capping and uncapping a needle.

If needle syringes are necessary to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically re-sheathes the needle, if possible. Recapping of needles should be avoided if possible. When absolutely necessary to recap, use a needle re-capping device to perform the recapping or use the one-handed scoop technique. This technique and examples of safety needles and safe recapping devices are available in the EHS Safe Operating Procedure, **Sharps – Handling and Disposing Safe Operating Procedure**, [https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-sharps-handling\\_disposing.pdf](https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-bio-sharps-handling_disposing.pdf).

One recent incident involving a sharp occurred when a worker was washing and drying a blender blade. When using or cleaning any sharp instrument or equipment, maintain focus on the task and never make assumptions. The worker assumed that a cloth in between the blade and their hand was adequate protection. If it is not possible to wear a cut-resistant glove when handling sharp blades/equipment, be sure to position fingers and hands so as to be out of the path of the blade. Consider using an assistive tool such as a brush to clean the sharp surfaces. Allow sharp blades/equipment to air dry.

All sharps must be handled with vigilance and disposed of in a manner that protects you and others from exposure and possible injury.

## 5. 2023 Annual Stormwater Report - Feedback

EHS recently submitted the 2023 Annual Stormwater Report to the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) and is now soliciting feedback from the campus community. Comments on either the 2023 Annual Report or the Stormwater Management Plan can be directed to EHS using the “Submit Comments” link on the Stormwater Management web page:

[:https://ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-management](https://ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-management).

## 6. How Can EHS Assist?

Environmental Health and Safety is committed to excellent customer service and offers a *Customer Satisfaction Survey* as an easy method for the campus community to provide feedback on our services and staff. Would you please take a few moments to complete the survey (<http://ehs.unl.edu/survey>)? This will help EHS to identify areas where we might need to focus more 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](mailto:bosthus1@unl.edu) if you would rather communicate outside the parameters of this survey.

## 7. Revised Safe Operating Procedure

### ➤ Slips, Trips, Falls – Reducing Risk and Avoiding Injury

[https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-slips\\_trips\\_falls.pdf](https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-slips_trips_falls.pdf)

Added additional safe practices.

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

### **Environmental Health and Safety**

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