

In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – July 6, 2023

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1. Is This What You See Out Your Windshield?

Drivers on cell phones see just a fraction of their driving environment.



For the past decade, distracted driving has taken U.S. roadways by storm, endangering not only the distracted drivers, but their passengers, pedestrians and others using the road. When we're behind the wheel, we must focus on one task: safe driving. Anytime you shift your attention from driving, you're distracted. Do not let this be the view out YOUR windshield.

Resources

- Don't drive distracted. (2023, March 16). *Safety+Health*. https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/23691-dont-drive-distracted?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily
- *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* (video) | NHTSA. (n.d.). NHTSA. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving>

2. Minimize Harmful Insect Encounters

It is that time of year when there is alternating wet weather and hot weather in the transition from spring to summer. That weather pattern creates standing water, which is the 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.

Mosquitos or tick bites can transmit vector-borne diseases such as West Nile (mosquitos), Lyme disease (ticks) and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (ticks). These diseases are called “Vector-Borne Diseases” because they are transmitted through an insect or “vector.” Vectors are living organisms that can transmit infectious diseases between humans or from animals to humans.

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 inject it into a new host during a subsequent blood meal. According to the Centers for Disease Control, vector-borne diseases have increased threefold in the United States between 2004 and 2016.

Problems associated with vector-borne diseases:

- They are hard to predict, prevent or control.
- Only a few have vaccines.
- Some vectors are notoriously hard to kill and develop resistance to insecticides.
- Almost all vector-borne viruses and bacteria are zoonotic, meaning they can cause disease in animals as well as in humans.

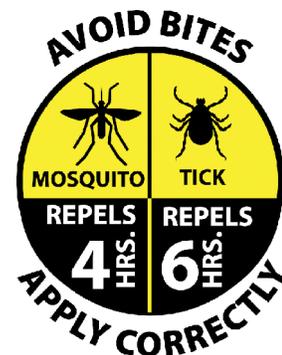
To avoid “getting bit,” follow these prevention tips:

- 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. Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer lasting protection. It is best to use an EPA-registered insect repellent and the EPA has developed a web tool to help you select the right repellent for you (<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>). Below are some of the common active ingredients in repellents and example products.
 - DEET. (CDC recommends products with 20%-30% DEET) Products containing DEET include Cutter, OFF!, Skintastic. 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). Products containing picaridin include Cutter Advanced, Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus, and Autan (outside the United States).
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD). Products containing OLE include Repel and Off! Botanicals. Do not use these products on children under 3 years old.
 - IR3535. Products containing IR3535 include Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Expedition and SkinSmart.

- Para-menthane-diol (PMD) Product examples are “Off!”, “Off! Botanicals”
- Cover up. Wear a long-sleeved shirt, socks and pants. Thoroughly check skin and clothing daily 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.
 - Mosquitos 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.
- Reapply insect repellent as directed.
 - Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
 - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
- A new graphic appearing on the label of insect repellents applied to the skin helps consumers more easily identify how long the repellent is effective against mosquitoes and ticks. Use of this graphic by manufacturers is voluntary. Companies that apply to the EPA for permission to use the graphic must first provide data documenting their current testing protocols and standard evaluation practices.
- Treat clothing with products containing permethrin (0.5%) or purchase pretreated clothing.
 - Permethrin-treated clothing will retain repellent activity through multiple washes. Permethrin sprays are available to treat clothing (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 whenever outdoors (or indoors if mosquitoes can get inside); mosquitoes can bite any time of day or night.



- EPA tips to prevent mosquito bites - <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/tips-prevent-mosquito-bites>
 - Remove Mosquito Habitats
 - Use Appropriate Pesticides
 - Use Structural Barriers
 - Avoid Getting Bitten

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” on your pet so ticks are brought indoors on their fur.
- Check your clothing for ticks. Any ticks that are found should be removed. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing. If clothes are damp, additional time may be needed. If clothes require washing first, hot water is recommended. Cold and medium temperature water will not kill ticks.
- Remove embedded ticks as soon as possible.
 - Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as you can. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don’t twist or jerk the tick.
 - If the mouthparts break off and remain in the skin, try and 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.
 - Dispose of the tick by flushing it down the toilet. Removed ticks may also be disposed of by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag or container, or wrapping it tightly in tape. Never crush a tick with your fingers. 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)
- Avoid folklore remedies such as “painting” the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly or using heat to make the tick detach from the skin. Such methods are not effective and might actually increase the risk of disease transmission.

- CDC has a new **Tick Bite Bot** tool to assist individuals with removing attached ticks and determining when to seek health care after a tick bite (<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/removal/tick-bite-bot.html>)

Disease Symptoms and Foreign Travel

- Know the signs and symptoms of potential vector-borne diseases and seek prompt medical attention if experiencing symptoms.
- Many vector-borne diseases cause symptoms which resemble cold and flu symptoms and can include fever, headache, muscle pain, swelling at the bite site, rashes, and fatigue. If you have been outdoors or know you were bit and experience any of these symptoms within 30 days, call your healthcare provider.

Researchers traveling to other countries/parts of the United States to conduct research activities should review the prevalence of vector-borne diseases as they review other local safety considerations.

Resources

- EPA Guide on Using Insect Repellents Safely and Effectively <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/using-insect-repellents-safely-and-effectively>
- 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/ncezid/dvbd/>
- CDC Symptoms of Tickborne Illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/symptoms.html>
- CDC West Nile Virus <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html>
- CDC Lyme Disease <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>
- Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever <https://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/index.html>
- 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 New 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:
 - (1) <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>
 - (2) <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>
 - (3) <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

3. 25 Steps to a Safer Office (Part 2)

It is obvious that safety and health hazards exist in laboratories, kitchens, workshops. However, there are a surprising number of hazards in an office setting. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 80,410 office workers suffered on-the-job injuries in 2008. Many of these injuries could be prevented had workers recognized the risks and implemented simple workplace modifications to help mitigate them. We will review the major areas of injury and steps you can take to reduce the risk of injury in an office setting.

In the May listserv we reviewed 11 of the 25 steps to a safety office. If you missed the May 11 issue, review Part 1 online at <https://ehs.unl.edu/listserv-past-issues>

For more office safety suggestions, review steps 12-25.

Looking at a computer a large portion of the day can cause eyestrain and/or dryness which leads to trouble focusing.

12. Dim the lights and use task lamps. Florescent lights in offices often are too bright for optimal vision. A light about half-normal is optimal. If more light is needed for a specific task, use an individual task lamp.
13. Correctly position monitors. Monitors should be slightly below eye level and 20-26 inches from the eyes. Think 'looking slightly below the horizon' when looking straight ahead.
14. Minimize screen glare. Avoid positioning monitors opposite open windows. If that is not possible, close shades or blinds. Glare reduction filters for monitors are available.
15. Wear the right glasses. Let you eye doctor know if you spend a large portion of the day working on a computer.
16. Increase font size on computer. Small font sizes can strain both vision and neck as workers tend to pull the head forward to view smaller print.
17. Take a break. Give eyes a rest by allowing them to focus on things at varying distances. The break can be working on tasks that don't require looking at the computer screen.

Between 2004 and 2008 there were approximately 3,830 office fires a year which caused four deaths and 37 injuries annually. A routine look around the office can help reduce the likelihood of a devastating fire.

18. Maintain cords in good repair. Damaged and ungrounded power cords pose a serious fire hazard. Make sure cords are not overloading outlets. The most common causes of fires are improper use of extension cord and overloading. Extension cords are only for temporary use, connecting one device at a time.
19. UNL does not condone use of space heaters as there are several potential hazards leading to fire that are associated with space heater use.

20. Never block fire sprinklers. Objects should never be placed higher than 18 inches below sprinkler heads to allow a full range of coverage.
21. Do not block escape routes or prop open fire doors. Items should never be stored along an emergency exit route. Fire doors held open by unapproved means (such as with a garbage can or chair) create a significant fire hazard.

In addition to employee training and improved equipment, certain administrative controls can aid hazard recognition and the elimination of potentially dangerous situations.

22. Conduct walk-throughs. Periodically walking through the workspace with an eye toward hazard recognition can increase safety.
23. Monitor signs of musculoskeletal disorders. Workers should pay attention to any pain, fatigue, numbness or weakness for early intervention to prevent more serious musculoskeletal injury.
24. Talk about concerns. Workers may notice potential hazards in the area or procedures that might not be apparent in a periodic walk-through.
25. Establish a reporting system. Consider an anonymous reporting process that encourages workers to come forward with their concerns. Near miss information is beneficial to help prevent injury.

Do not become complacent about safety because you work in an office setting. Remain aware of the potential hazards of your workspace.

Resources

- Claussen, L. (2022, September 2). Recognizing hidden dangers: 25 steps to a safer office. *Safety+Health a NSC Publication*. Retrieved April 13, 2023, from https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/recognizing-hidden-dangers-25-steps-to-a-safer-office-2?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily
- EHS Near Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting System <https://ehs.unl.edu/near-missclose-call-incident-reporting-form>

4. Promote Summer Safety with Safety Posters & Digital Signage

Promote summer safety throughout the university with the following resources:

- Safety Posters and digital signage files are available in the following categories: Biosafety, Chemical Safety, Laboratory Safety, Safety for Everyone, Weather Safety.
- Heads Up! graphics and digital signage files are available to raise awareness of safe practices whether walking, riding a bicycle or motorcycle, driving a motor vehicle, skateboarding or riding a scooter.

- Plan Ahead graphics and digital signage files are available to help eliminate/reduce injury incidents. The majority of injury incidents at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln can be avoided by taking a few minutes prior to starting a task to think about the task and plan ahead to mitigate potential hazards.

Posters and files are available upon request to ehs@unl.edu or 402.472.4925.

Resources

- Safety Posters <https://ehs.unl.edu/safety-posters>
- Heads Up! <https://ehs.unl.edu/heads-up-marketing-materials>
- Plan Ahead <https://ehs.unl.edu/plan-ahead>

5. Check Out the EHS “Spotlight”

On the Environmental Health & Safety landing page, <https://ehs.unl.edu/>, scroll down regularly to view the “Spotlight” feature. Currently you can see a photo of new EHS staff members. Read a short bio to get to know them.

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

Environmental Health and Safety

3630 East Campus Loop, Warehouse 1

Lincoln, NE 68583-0824

402.472.4925

Email: ehs@unl.edu

Website: <http://ehs.unl.edu>

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