In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – October 12, 2023

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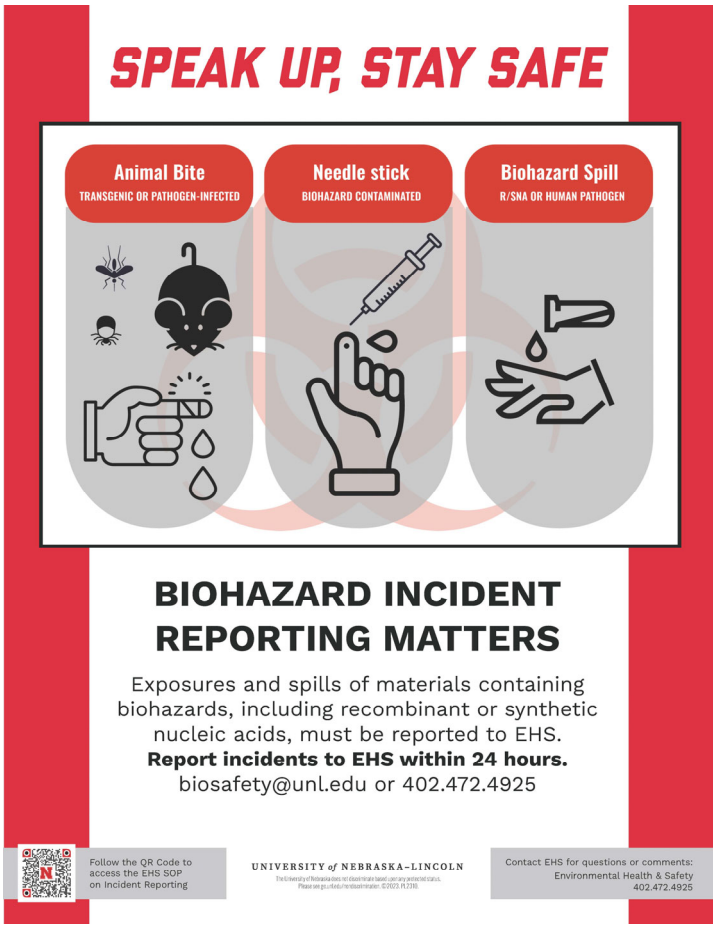
1. Biosafety & Biosecurity

The EHS Biosafety Team at UNL, in conjunction with ABSA International Association for Biosafety and Biosecurity, would like to announce that October is Biosafety and Biosecurity Month. This year's focus is to bring Biosafety and Biosecurity Month back to the core components of ethical research, transparency, training, engagement, and stewardship of biosafety and biosecurity.

To promote awareness and stewardship of biosafety we want to highlight the importance of reporting incidents involving biohazards on campus. EHS has recently published a revised SOP on this topic, Biohazard Incident Reporting (formerly titled "Incident Reporting - National Institute of Health (NIH) Guidance"). It is important that lab workers and others with knowledge of an incident involving biohazardous materials contact EHS about the incident promptly. EHS will follow up with affected individuals but also provides guidance on next steps, for example, submission of forms related to workers compensation or the need to seek medical treatment if necessary.

EHS does not want any UNL employee or student to avoid reporting for fear of repercussions from their involvement in an incident. It is important for everyone to know that UNL has a regulatory obligation to report certain types of incidents to regulatory bodies like the National Institutes of Health, the CDC or USDA-APHIS. Reporting requirements depend on various factors and that is another reason to notify EHS should an incident occur. Contact EHS at 402.472.4925 and ask for a biosafety team member or email biosafety@unl.edu to report incidents involving biohazardous materials.

A safety poster is now available to serve as a reminder regarding incident reporting. The poster is available upon request to ehs@unl.edu or 402.472.4925. Posters may be picked up at the EHS office or can be sent via campus mail. Include the number of posters you are requesting, your name and campus mailing address. This poster is also available in a format suitable for digital display by requesting the file for digital display.



2. Your Eyes May Depend on an Eyewash

Emergency showers and eyewash stations are required in chemical, biological, and radioactive material laboratories. They are also required in shop areas where hazardous chemicals are used and/or acid batteries are charged. These safety features should be located within 10 seconds of unobstructed travel from the hazard, preferably within the laboratory/shop/work area.

EHS has a new safety poster instructing readers to:

- Know where the nearest eyewash is located.
- Ensure the eyewash is not obstructed.
- Test and flush eyewashes weekly.

To request your copies or a file for digital display contact ehs@unl.edu or call 402.472.4925. Indicate the number of posters and/or a file for digital display, your name and your campus mailing address.

3. Do You Know if your Disinfectants are Expired?

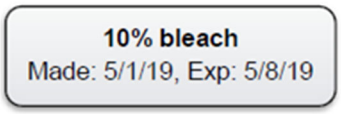
During the COVID-19 pandemic, we all learned how critical proper use of disinfectants is to public health. Researchers use disinfectants to ensure that microorganisms and other biohazardous materials don't escape the lab or infect lab workers. It is important to remember that the efficacy of disinfectants is not indefinite; it diminishes over time. An often overlooked but vital aspect of using disinfectants responsibly is being aware of expiration dates. This is a small detail but can have a significant impact on health, safety, the environment, and research quality.

Most manufactured disinfectants that come ready-to-use or as a concentrate have an expiration date printed on the bottle. However, there are some disinfectants that do not have a printed expiration date or only have a manufactured date stamped on the bottle (e.g., bleach products). In these

cases, it is important to refer to the EHS SOP Chemical Disinfectants for Biohazardous Materials for guidance on the shelf-life of specific disinfectant classes as well as disinfectant container labeling requirements.

Disinfectant containers in general and specifically those that are made in the lab by diluting a concentrated reagent (e.g., 70% ethanol) must be labeled like any other chemical container (guidance is in the EHS SOP Chemical Container Labeling). However, disinfectant containers must also specify the concentration of the disinfectant, the preparation date, and the expiration date of the solution. This enhanced labeling was introduced in 2019 and EHS regularly cites this as a safety issue during EHS safety and compliance surveys.

Review this example label as a guideline for components to include:



Example Label

EHS asks for your help in establishing proper labeling of disinfectants as standard practice in your lab to keep yourself and your coworkers safe when working with biohazardous materials.

4. Situational Preparedness – Drowsy Driving

Situational preparedness is so important that this listserv regularly provides resources and information to promote safe navigation of roadways and walkways, whatever the mode of transportation and raise awareness of particular hazards such as drowsy driving.

Drowsy driving kills but fatalities are preventable. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) designates November 5-11, 2023, as Drowsy Driving Prevention Week to raise awareness of this often-overlooked hazard. Annually this observance is intentionally set for the week following the end of Daylight Savings Time, a particularly hazardous time as our biological clocks adjust.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that there are 71,000 injuries and more than 1550 deaths caused by drowsy driving crashes each year in the U.S. Drowsy driving accounts for 2.4% of fatal crashes in the U.S. according to the most recent data from the NHTSA. In a survey by the NSF more than half of American adults reported they consistently drive drowsy; 20% admitted to having fallen asleep behind the wheel in the previous year.

Losing 2 hours of sleep has the same effect on driving as having 3 beers. Driving “fatigued” results in a threefold likelihood of a crash.

Factors leading to drowsy driving:

- Eating a heavy meal before traveling or going on a trip with many hours of driving.
- Lack of sleep due to long or irregular hours, either for work or personal reasons.
- Driving during normal sleeping hours (midnight to 6 am) or in late afternoon.
- Driving in inclement weather due to the extra concentration required.
- Consuming alcohol or taking medications that can cause drowsiness.

Watch for these signs and symptoms of driver fatigue:

- Burning or a heavy sensation in the eyes.
- Having trouble keeping your head up.
- Trouble focusing accompanied by frequent blinking and yawning.
- Muscle twitching and back tension or hallucinations.
- Wandering thoughts – including difficulty remembering the past few miles driven.
- Missing an exit, drifting within a lane or crossing roadway lines.
- Hitting a rumble strip on the side of the road.

Tips to prevent driver fatigue:

- Realize that caffeine may not help stave off drowsiness.
- Get regular exercise and eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Aim to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep daily.
- Avoid driving alone if possible.
- Avoid alcohol or medication that affects your ability to drive.
- Keep the driver’s area cool and ventilated.

To observe driving drowsy prevention week:

- Don’t drive drowsy. Think of the potential negative consequences to yourself, your passengers and other road users.
- Understand the danger. Absorb the information provided in this article so you can make modifications to your driving habits.
- Champion the cause. Review the resources through the NHTSA “More on Drowsy Driving” section. Take the Drowsy Driving Quiz formulated by the Federal Motor Carrier Administration (FMCSA). Share information and the quiz with others to help educate your friends and co-workers of drowsy driving dangers.

Resources

- *Drowsy Driving | NHTSA*. (n.d.). NHTSA. https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drowsy-driving
- *Drowsy Driving quiz*. (n.d.). FMCSA. https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/driver-safety/sleep-apnea/drowsy-driving-quiz
- Printable Drowsy Driving Quiz https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/Drowsy-Driving-Quiz.pdf

6. 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 within 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 are 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 help 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
- OSHA Publications for "Agricultural Operations" (various topics, English/Spanish) https://www.osha.gov/publications/bytopic/agricultural-operations
- OSHA Quick Card "Backing Up Farm Vehicles and Equipment Safety" (English/Spanish) https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3733.pdf

Adopt Safety as Your Attitude – DON'T LEARN BY ACCIDENT!

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