

## In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – February 5, 2025

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### 1. Are You and Your Workplace Ready for an Emergency?

Your department/facility/area should have an Emergency Action Plan to facilitate and organize employer and employee actions during workplace emergencies. Well-developed emergency plans and proper employee training, such that employees understand their roles and responsibilities within the plan, will result in fewer and less severe employee injuries and less collateral damage to ongoing research or facilities due to emergencies.

Putting together an emergency action plan that deals with specifics of your work site/building is not difficult. It involves describing how employees should respond to different types of emergencies, considering your specific work site layout, structural features, and emergency systems. Emergency action plans should be reviewed at least once a year and more often, if necessary, to reflect changes in personnel or other specific attributes of the area/facility.

The UNL Safety At Nebraska Emergency Preparation website (<https://safety.unl.edu/preparation>) notes items that should be considered to maintain emergency readiness. The Safety at Nebraska website hosts a template for developing a **Building Emergency Action Plan**.

All workers should be familiar with the emergency action plan, including how they will be notified of an emergency, at least two safe routes of escape from the building, and where they can shelter-in-place, if needed. In an emergency people tend to freeze, so they need to know what to do without having to think about it—that means training. If workers have additional roles to play in an emergency, such as shutting down equipment or assisting co-workers who may need help, they must be trained in those duties as well. In addition to regular review/retraining, make sure that all new workers are trained on the emergency action plan as part of their onboarding.

Do you know where to find your department/area/facility's Emergency Action Plan? Have you reviewed the plan in the last 6-12 months? Now is the time. If your department does not have an Emergency Action Plan contact your departmental safety committee or office on how best to proceed with the development of a plan.

## Resources

- Building/Department Emergency Action Plan Template (scroll down for a Word template) <https://safety.unl.edu/faculty-staff-departments/>
- EHS (Safe Operating Procedure) SOPs **Emergency Preparedness** <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop-emergency-preparedness/>
- EHS web-based training **Emergency Preparedness** web-based training <https://ehs.unl.edu/web-based-training#EP>

## 2. Find and Maintain Your AED

An AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) is a smart, portable device that can be used to help heart attack victims. Because of their simple design, verbal cues, and ease of operation, AEDs can be safely used by the general public.

An AED contains a power pack and two electrodes. The electrodes are applied to strategic locations on the chest of the victim and the power pack delivers a shock when a button is pushed. If effective, the shock restores normal electrical rhythm to the heart. An AED will not deliver a shock unless it first detects an abnormal heart rhythm.

To use an AED, you need to:

- A. **Know the location of the nearest AED in your workspace.** Like fire extinguishers and other fixtures, we often walk past AEDs and don't really notice them. In the event of an emergency, it is important to be able to quickly retrieve an AED for use.
- B. **Ensure routine maintenance is completed.** Batteries are one of the most important parts of an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) system. To make sure an AED will work properly in an emergency, periodically check batteries as directed by the manufacturer to make sure batteries are in working condition. Replace the batteries when

needed. The manufacturer will provide additional maintenance instructions, such as periodic replacement of electrodes and pads.

- C. **Know how to properly dispose of AED batteries.** AED batteries contain heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, and nickel which must be properly disposed. Complete and submit a Hazardous Materials Collection Tag for disposal through Environmental Health and Safety.

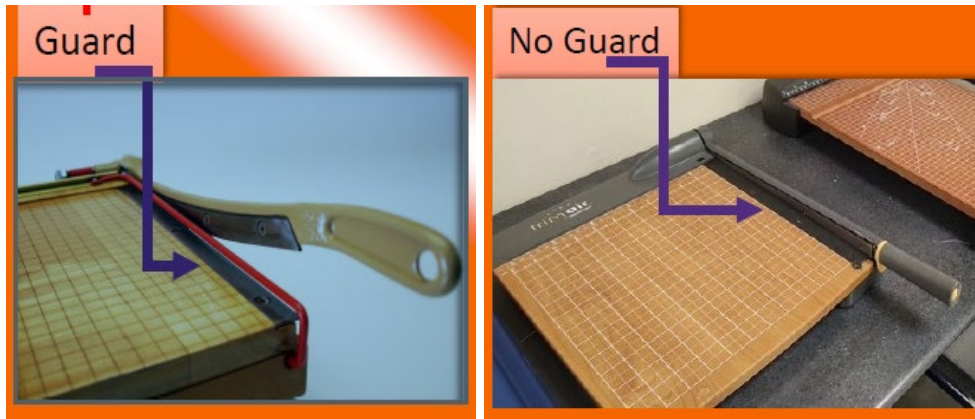
If it becomes necessary to discard the entire AED unit, contact EHS for pickup and disposal of the device by completing/submitting a Hazardous Materials Collection Tag.

### Resources

- EHS SOP **Automatic External Defibrillators**  
<https://cms.unl.edu/business-and-finance/university-operations/ehs/sites/unl.edu.business-and-finance.university-operations.ehs/files/media/file/s-AED.pdf>
- *How Often Should A Defibrillator Be Serviced?* | AED USA. (n.d.). AED USA Knowledge. [https://www.aedusa.com/knowledge/how-often-should-a-defibrillator-be-serviced/?utm\\_source=google](https://www.aedusa.com/knowledge/how-often-should-a-defibrillator-be-serviced/?utm_source=google)
- EHS SOP **Battery Disposal**  
<https://ehs.unl.edu/sites/unl.edu.business-and-finance.university-operations.ehs/files/media/file/s-batterydisposal.pdf>
- EHS SOP **Hazardous/Radioactive Material Collection Procedures** [https://cms.unl.edu/business-and-finance/university-operations/ehs/sites/unl.edu.business-and-finance.university-operations.ehs/files/media/file/s-chem\\_collection\\_procedures.pdf](https://cms.unl.edu/business-and-finance/university-operations/ehs/sites/unl.edu.business-and-finance.university-operations.ehs/files/media/file/s-chem_collection_procedures.pdf)

### 3. Paper Cutter Safety

Do you consider safety in your workday at the office? The quick answer is “Yes, of course.” But do you really consider the potential hazards of the items you use regularly? Many offices have paper trimmers or guillotine cutters. Here are images showing a cutter with guard and a cutter without a guard:



At another university in the United States, an incident occurred recently involving a cutter without a guard. A staff member cut the tip of their finger off using a manual paper cutter while cutting index cards for a class. The paper cutter did not have a finger guard on it. The staff member is currently healing fine from this amputation.

Do you have this equipment in your work area? If so, inspect your paper cutters to ensure a guard is in place. Older models in particular may be missing a finger guard. Replace an unguarded paper cutter with one that is guarded

This is a topic for which office staff may not be aware of the need for cutter guarding. Share this with your co-workers!

### Resources

- University of Washington. (2021). PAPER CUTTER SAFETY. In [www.ehs.washington.edu](http://www.ehs.washington.edu).  
<https://www.ehs.washington.edu/system/files/resources/paper-cutter-focus-sheet.pdf>

## 4. NEW Oversight Policy for DURC and PEPP

The United States Government (USG) has issued an oversight policy for Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC) and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential (PEPP), with an effective date of May 6, 2025. This policy supersedes prior policies related to DURC and PEPP. The new policy greatly expands the scope of research that falls within the federal and institutional oversight mandated by the policy. Research that falls within the scope of the policy requires certain oversight actions that begin when a federal agency is considering funding a proposal and continues throughout the life of the work.

The two categories of research subject to the policy are briefly described below.

- **Category 1** - Research involving all Risk Group 4 biological agents and Select Agents and Toxins (<https://www.selectagents.gov/sat/list.htm>) and a subset of Risk Group 3 biological agents that result in any of the following experimental outcomes:
  1. Increase transmissibility of a pathogen within or between host species.
  2. Increase virulence of a pathogen or convey virulence to a non-pathogen.
  3. Increase resistance to a pathogen or toxin to clinical and/or veterinary prophylactic or therapeutic interventions.
  4. Increase toxicity of a known toxin or produce a novel toxin.
  5. Increase the stability of a pathogen or toxin in the environment or increase the ability to disseminate a pathogen or toxin.
  6. Alter the host range or tropism of a pathogen or toxin.
  7. Decrease the ability for a human or veterinary pathogen or toxin to be detected using standard diagnostic or analytical methods.
  8. Alter a human or veterinary pathogen or toxin to disrupt the effectiveness of pre-existing immunity, via immunization or natural infection, against the pathogen or toxin.
  9. Enhance the susceptibility of a host population to a pathogen or toxin.
  
- **Category 2** – Research involving a human pathogen or potential human pathogen that that can likely spread uncontrollably and cause moderate to severe disease and/or mortality in humans and can reasonably be expected to result in any of the following experimental outcomes:
  1. Enhance transmissibility of the pathogen in humans.
  2. Enhance the virulence of a pathogen in humans.
  3. Enhance the immune evasion of the pathogen in humans such as by modifying the pathogen to disrupt effectiveness of pre-existing immunity via immunization or natural infection.
  4. Generate, use, reconstitute, or transfer an eradicated or extinct pathogen with pandemic potential, or a previously identified pathogen with enhanced pandemic potential.

All research (existing and for which a funding proposal is being submitted) that may be subject to the new policy must be promptly reported to the Institutional Biosafety Committee via the UNL Biosafety Program.

**Additional information** can be found at:

- USG Policy for Oversight of Dual Use Research of Concern and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential, May 2024. <https://aspr.hhs.gov/S3/Documents/USG-Policy-for-Oversight-of-DURC-and-PEPP-May2024-508.pdf>
- Implementation Guidance for the USG Policy for Oversight of Dual Use Research of Concern and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential, May 2024. <https://aspr.hhs.gov/S3/Documents/USG-DURC-PEPP-Implementation-Guidance-May2024-508.pdf>
- UNL Biosafety Program: [biosafety@unl.edu](mailto:biosafety@unl.edu), Phone:402.472.9554 or 402.472.4925.

## **5. EHS Needs to Know if You Use Trichloroethylene, Perchloroethylene and/or Carbon Tetrachloride**

On May 8, 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issued a final rule regulating the manufacture, distribution, and use of methylene chloride (89 FR 39254). In December, the USEPA published additional rules to expand the list of regulated chemicals to include trichloroethylene (89 FR 102568, published December 17, 2024), carbon tetrachloride (89 FR 103512, published December 18, 2024), and perchloroethylene (89 FR 103560, published December 18, 2024).

These rules were issued under the authority of the Toxic Substance Control Act. These rules ban and/or restrict certain uses of these chemicals. This rule potentially impacts the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) community, particularly those who use these chemicals as laboratory solvents/reagents, and people using products containing these chemicals such as paint strippers, adhesives, sealants, and degreasers/cleaners.

EHS previously gathered information to identify people potentially using methylene chloride. It is important that we now gather information to identify person who may be using trichloroethylene, carbon tetrachloride, and/or perchloroethylene or products containing these chemicals. Please complete this form (<https://forms.office.com/r/BCD70MtG3a>) if you are aware of or suspect use of these chemicals or products containing these chemicals. EHS will follow-up on all submissions to assess each use

individually and collaborate with the campus community to develop compliance plans.

Please submit this form promptly. If you have questions regarding this form, please contact EHS at [ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu) or 402.472.4925.

## 6. You KNOW What is Distracting

Over time this listserv has been investigating how to avoid injuries related to distracted driving and sharing this information for all faculty, staff and students to absorb and follow.

For its annual Traffic Safety Culture Index the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety surveyed more than 2,700 licensed drivers about their attitudes and behaviors while behind the wheel. This survey uncovered that the vast majority of U.S. drivers believe distracted driving is “very or extremely dangerous,” yet at least 1 in 4 admit to engaging in distracted driving practices.

For example, around 93% of the drivers say both texting/emailing and reading on a handheld cellphone are “very” or “extremely” dangerous. Despite this, 37% said they’ve read a text/email while driving, while 27% reported having sent a text/email while driving. Despite acknowledging the dangers, some drivers continue to engage in potentially deadly behaviors such as this and other “distracting” behaviors.

You **know** what is distracting as you use a motor vehicle, so make sure you do not distract yourself either visually (eyes off the road), manually (hands off the wheel), or cognitive (mind wandering).

### Resources

- People know distracted driving is unsafe but do it anyway, survey shows. (2024, December 12). *Safety+Health*.  
[https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/26241-people-know-distracted-driving-is-unsafe-but-do-it-anyway-survey-shows?utm\\_source=sfmc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=dailyjan16&utm\\_content=](https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/26241-people-know-distracted-driving-is-unsafe-but-do-it-anyway-survey-shows?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailyjan16&utm_content=)
- 2023 Traffic Safety Culture Index - AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. *AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety* -.  
<https://aaafoundation.org/2023-traffic-safety-culture-index/>
- Distracted driving: Know the three types. (2024, February 2). *Safety+Health*.

<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/25013-distracted-driving-know-the-three-types>

## 7. Safety Questions? EHS is Here to Assist

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) maintains a robust website providing access to a Virtual Safety Manual, hundreds of Safe Operating Procedures, information on Stormwater Management at UNL, a Training Needs Assessment to help workers and their supervisors identify EHS training requirements for specific job duties/research, web-based training to assist employees with fulfillment of required training at their convenience, past safety listserv articles on a variety of topics, and other resources.

EHS is committed to excellent customer service and toward that goal offers a *Customer Satisfaction Survey* as an easy method for the campus community to provide feedback on our services and staff whether negative or positive. By taking a few moments to complete the survey (<https://ehs.unl.edu/customer-satisfaction-survey>), you will be helping us to identify areas where we might need to focus more attention.

To effectively evaluate potential areas for improvement for focus/refocus, please provide specific information or examples and your name and contact information. The Director, Brenda Osthus, follows up on all submissions. 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 directly.

If the resources at <https://ehs.unl.edu/> don't answer your safety question, email the question to [ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu) for response by the EHS staff member most qualified to assist.

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

### **Environmental Health and Safety**

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<https://ehs.unl.edu>



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