

In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – April 3, 2025

1. Situational Preparedness – Distracted Driving Awareness Month
 2. Oversight Policy on DURC and PEPP effective in May
 3. Stormwater – UNL Management Plan & 2024 Report
 4. Severe Weather is Coming
 5. NEW Training: Two DURC-PEPP Courses
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1. Situational Preparedness – Distracted Driving Awareness Month

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has identified distracted driving as a deadly epidemic. April is the national Distracted Driving Awareness Month. April 10-14 you may see increased law enforcement on the roadways as part of the national media campaign “Put the Phone Away or Pay.” Access the NHTSA video by that name, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving>, to view common distractions and consequences that could be deadly.

National Safety Council (NSC) analysis shows nearly 45,000 people died in preventable traffic crashes in 2024 in the United States. The NSC urges road users to remain fully focused on the task of driving. Distracted driving is tempting - but it has been proven that we simply cannot multi-task and give our full attention to the road. Put your phone down, limit distractions and focus on traveling to and from your destination safely. If you have a passenger, enlist them to answer your phone, text for you, or set up new GPS query. Speeding and impaired driving are other risky behaviors.

Risky driving behaviors are the major factors in roadway fatalities. Resolve to stop risky behavior while driving to protect yourself, your passengers and others on the road. Visit <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving#59741> to take the pledge to end your distracted driving and encourage your family and friends to take the pledge too.

Resources

- NSC: Nearly 45,000 people killed in traffic crashes in 2024. (2025, March 13). *Safety+Health*. <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/26571-nsc-nearly-45-000-people-killed-in-traffic-crashes-in->

[2024?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailymar17&utm_content=](https://www.nhtsa.gov/april-distracted-driving-awareness-month)

- *April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month | NHTSA.* (n.d.). NHTSA. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/april-distracted-driving-awareness-month>

2. Oversight Policy on DURC & PEPP effective in May

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 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, Phone:402.472.9554 or 402.472.4925

3. Stormwater – UNL Management Plan & 2024 Report

EHS recently submitted the 2024 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 2024 Annual Report or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Stormwater Management Plan can be directed to EHS using the “Submit Comments” link on the EHS website or submit to the EHS departmental email, ehs@unl.edu

Resources

- Stormwater Management at UNL
<https://ehs.unl.edu/resources/stormwater-management/>

4. Severe Weather Is Coming

Severe weather can happen anytime and in any part of the country, but severe weather is typically more prevalent during this time of year. 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 training 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 several types of natural disaster:

- **Lightning.** Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. When thunder roars, go indoors!
- **Tornados.** Tornados can happen anytime and anywhere. 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 it would be a good time to set one up. You can download a template from the university's SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website. 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://go.unl.edu/work-area-safety_sop

5. NEW Training: Two DURC-PEPP Courses

EHS has developed two new web-based training courses:

Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC)-PEPP: Role of PI course was designed to inform Principal Investigators of their obligations under the new USG DURC-PEPP policy previously discussed in this newsletter.

Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC)-PEPP: Role of IRE course was designed for members of the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) for the purpose of informing members of their role under the DURC-PEPP policy.

If either of these courses is applicable to your research or your position with the IBC, take these courses now. If you have questions contact EHS by phone, 402.472.5488 or email, ehs@unl.edu, and ask for a biosafety team member.

Resources

- EHS web-based training <https://ehs.unl.edu/web-based-training/>

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

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