

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

1. Situational Awareness – Driving Safely in the Rain
 2. Welcome New EHS Staff
 3. Avoid Harmful Insect Encounters
 4. National Safety Month
 5. Why Report Near Misses
 6. Updated Safe Operating Procedures
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1. Driving Safely in the Rain

Rain can reduce or impair visibility, and the roads have reduced tire traction when wet. If you must drive in heavy rain allow extra time to safely reach your destination. Dry the soles of your shoes after getting into your vehicle when it is raining so your shoes don't slip off the pedals while driving. Safety recommendations for driving in the rain include:

- Turn on your headlights to see and be seen. Maintain tire tread at proper depth and inflation.
- Be aware of and avoid flooded areas – never attempt to cross running water or flooded surfaces even if you think the water is not very deep.
- Reduce your speed. Speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions, not rainy conditions.
- Defrost windows before and while driving, if necessary.
- Use your wipers. Be prepared by replacing your wipers as needed.
- Keep a safe distance from other vehicles, leaving more space on wet roads. Increase your following distance from large trucks or buses.
- Turn off your cruise control to reduce the risk of hydroplaning. Be more alert. Watch for brake lights in front of you.

- Try to anticipate so you can avoid using your brakes. If you must brake, do so earlier and with less force than you would in normal driving conditions. Also, slow down when turning.
- If possible, stay in the middle lanes if available. Water tends to pool in the outside lanes.

Finally, if you have difficulty seeing the roadway and/or other vehicles when it's raining, pull off the road to a safe location until conditions improve.

Resources

- Drive safely in the rain. (2022, July 13). 2021-06-27 | *Safety+Health*.
https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/21360-drive-safely-in-the-rain?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailyapr10&utm_content=
- *Safety driving tips for driving in the rain - from Internet Traffic School*. (n.d.). Mendocino County Office of Education.
<https://www.mcoe.us/news/1785153/safety-driving-tips-for-driving-in-the-rain-from-internet-traffic-school>
- *Wet weather driving tips – AAA Exchange*. (n.d.).
<https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/driving-advice/wet-weather-driving-tips/>

2. Welcome New EHS Staff

Hello, my name is Audrey Codina. I joined Environmental Health and Safety as a Research and Laboratory Safety Specialist on November 11, 2024. I earned my BS from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in Kearney, NE. After graduating, I moved to the east coast and worked in the pharmaceutical industry, specifically in cell culture and vaccines research and development. Outside of work I enjoy traveling, reading, nature, and spending time with loved ones. What I like most about my position as a safety specialist is the team that I work with and my interactions with the campus community.

3. Avoid Harmful Insect Encounters

As spring transitions to summer, alternating wet and hot weather leads to standing water, which is a 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.

Mosquito or tick bites can transmit vector-borne diseases such as West Nile (mosquitoes), Lyme disease (ticks), Tularemia (ticks), Alpha-gal Syndrome (Red Meat Allergy, ticks) and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (ticks).

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 spread it to a new host during a subsequent blood meal. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), vector-borne diseases (VBD) have increased dramatically, with more than 1 million reported cases between 2001 and 2023. Further, it is estimated that actual cases of West Nile and Lyme disease might be 10 times higher than what is reported to the CDC. Increases are driven by changing land use patterns, global travel, and a changing climate.

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. It is best to use an EPA-registered insect repellent. The EPA has developed a web selection tool (<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>). Below are some of the common active ingredients in repellents.
 - DEET. (CDC recommends products with 20%-30% DEET).
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).
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD). Do not use these products on children under 3 years old.
 - IR3535 (at 20%).
 - 2-undecanone.
- **Cover up.** Wear a long-sleeved shirt, socks, and pants.
- **Thoroughly check** skin and clothing frequently for ticks.

- **Keep mosquitoes outside.** Use air conditioning and make sure your window/door screens are in good repair.
- **Avoid areas** prone to insect infestation and take action to eliminate or treat potential breeding grounds.
 - Mosquitoes 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 of products used for prevention.
- Treat clothing with products containing permethrin (0.5%) or purchase pretreated clothing.
 - Permethrin-treated clothing will retain repellent activity through multiple washes. Examples include 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 when around areas where there might be mosquitoes. They can bite any time of day or night.
- Reapply insect repellent as directed. If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.

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” into your house on pet fur.
- Check your clothing for ticks. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing.
- Showering within 2 hours of coming indoors can remove unattached ticks.

- Remove embedded ticks as soon as possible using fine-tipped tweezers, grasping the tick close to the skin's surface, and pulling straight out. If the mouthparts break off and remain in the skin, try to 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.
 - Removed ticks may be disposed of by flushing down the toilet. 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)

Watch for symptoms for 30 days.

- Many Vector-borne diseases (VBD) cause symptoms which resemble cold and flu symptoms and may include:
 - Rash
 - Fever
 - Fatigue
 - Headache
 - Muscle pain
 - Joint swelling and pain

Researchers traveling to other countries/parts of the United States to conduct research activities should review the prevalence of VBD when reviewing other local safety considerations. Speak with your healthcare provider regarding vaccine options; Chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, Tick-borne encephalitis, and yellow fever vaccines are available.

Resources

- 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/vector-borne-diseases/php/data-research/national-strategy/index.html>
- CDC Symptoms of Tickborne Illness: https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/symptoms.html

- NIOSH Tick-Borne Diseases <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/outdoor-workers/about/tick-borne-diseases.html>
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services WNV (West Nile Virus) Surveillance <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/West-Nile-Virus-Data.aspx>
- DHHS Tick-borne Diseases in Nebraska News 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 Vector-Borne Diseases <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Vector-borne-Disease.aspx>
CDC Zika Virus Information <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

4. National Safety Month

National Safety Month in 2025 will be observed in June, with a focus on promoting injury prevention at work, home, and on the road. The National Safety Council (NSC) is spearheading the initiative, encouraging individuals and organizations to actively engage in safety practices and awareness.

Watch these videos to learn more about a variety of ways to prevent injury.

- Fatal Flaws Cause Falls -Slips, Trips & Fall Prevention (Safety Memos, 1:58 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ee1G15uXPpY>
- Safety: A Waste of Time! – Safety Meetings & Hazard Awareness (Safety Memos, 3.14 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkkwG4t7gBU>
- Top 10 Hazard Blind Spots – Hazard Communication (Safety Memos, 2:53 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7ucHKl5dr8>
- Fatal Struck-By Accidents – Walking to Work (Safety Memos, 2:03 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZajCjslw6Q8>

- Food & Your Mood (Safety Memos, 2:29 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeW8ythHOKQ>

Preventable injuries are the leading cause of death in the United States. Access free safety tools and resources related to the weekly themes at the NSC Resource site below:

- Week 1 (June 1-7): Continuous Improvement
- Week 2 (June 8-14): Employee Engagement
- Week 3 (June 15-21): Roadway Safety
- Week 4 (June 22-30): Wellbeing

Resources - NSC June National Safety Month – Stay Safe at Work and Beyond: https://www.nsc.org/faforms/national-safety-month-materials?srsId=AfmBOopMmAWIbFtIFnadeLuiMTj_idPQM9IPzh_x8RIPmk5P1HCJv8VY

5. Why Report Near Misses

The definition of a near miss is an unplanned event that did not result in injury, hazard, or damage but had the potential to do so. Also known as a “close call,” a near miss often identifies a system weakness that if not corrected, could lead to dangerous hazards or injury in the future. Basically, near miss incidents bring to light significant opportunities to improve safety practice. The following are some near miss examples:

- Events where injury could have occurred but didn't
- Unsafe working or workplace conditions
- Unsafe or improper behavior
- Unsafe employee work habits
- Improper use of equipment
- Malfunctioning equipment
- Minor injuries and incidents with potential to become more serious

The most common cause of near miss incidents is human error/inattention. Other common causes can also be a system or process error and workers not following established procedures.

Here are 10 important reasons why you should report near misses:

- **Establishes safe practices in the workplace:** Reporting a near miss helps to establish and continue safe practices within the workplace.
- **Reduces risk:** Reporting near misses can improve your safety program and reduces the overall tolerance for risk.
- **Allows information to be shared easily:** Information provided enables an employer to communicate the facts, causes, and corrective actions to all employees regarding near misses.
- **Collects valuable data:** Reporting of near misses provides valuable data and information to employees and management about how to avoid and prevent future hazards and injuries.
- **Provides an opportunity to improve safety operations:** Near misses provides a significant opportunity to identify weaknesses to improve the safety, health, and security in the workplace or on a job site.
- **Avoids complacency:** With near miss reporting, employers avoid complacency by constantly evaluating processes and looking for improvements.
- **Provides a useful tool to identify workplace hazards:** Near miss reporting is a unique tool to identify workplace hazards without significant risk.
- **Involves employees:** A good near miss reporting systems allows employees to be involved in the safety program and increases employee engagement.
- **Demonstrates management's commitment to safety:** Near miss reporting demonstrates management's commitment to a culture of

safety, which should be promoted to workers without fear of discipline or reprimand.

- **Allows identification of trends:** Near miss reporting is a valuable collection of data over time and allows management to identify possible trends and potential risks.

Workers' reports of near misses identify potential areas of safety concern. Often a near miss in one department/facility/area has potential implications elsewhere in the university. Incident reporting can help save time, money and resources that would have been used on repairing damage or dealing with the results of an incident, whether a personal or research loss.

Resources

- Safety International Team. (2022, March 23). *10 important reasons why you need to implement near miss reporting*. Safety International, LLC. <https://www.safety-international.com/posts/near-miss-reporting/>
- Near Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting Tool <https://ehs.unl.edu/near-missclose-call-incident-reporting-form/>

6. Updated Safe Operating Procedures

The following SOPs have been updated as noted.

- **Autoclave Operation and Use** <https://go.unl.edu/autoclave-operations-use>
Clarified the purpose of this SOP. Updated the section on Autoclave Run Settings to provide temperatures typically used for steam sterilization and added Guidelines for Cycle Types. Added section on Autoclaving Contaminated Animal Waste.
- **All Shipping SOPs** <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop-shipping/>
The five documents regarding DOT/IATA shipping were updated to reflect that in general, University of Nebraska-Lincoln shippers have an account with FedEx and the Air Waybill is completed electronically. The information required for hard copy and electronic Air Waybills is the same.

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

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