

In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – September 10, 2025

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1. Safety vs. Security: Building a Dual-Focused Culture in the Lab

As researchers strive to understand the real risks associated with labs today, they need to consider lab security essentials, including inventory control, access logging, and cybersecurity measures. Laboratories are uniquely complex environments where safety and security intersect in critical ways. Where chemical, biological, radiological, and physical hazards converge in one work setting there are unique safety protocol needs.

According to Robert Emery, a leading expert in laboratory health and safety, there is a need for lab leaders to expand their thinking beyond traditional safety measures. Lab safety typically focuses on preventing intentional harm through engineering controls, training, and protective equipment. Lab security often deals with intentional threats such as acts of sabotage, theft, or violence that may originate from within or outside of the organization.

Safety assumes people are trying to do the right thing. Employees come to work and do their jobs safely to return home unharmed. Security concerns begin with the possibility that someone may seek to intentionally cause harm or exploit vulnerabilities. This important distinction between safety and security changes the way risks are assessed and mitigated.

A significant overlooked concern is insider threat:

1. Malicious insiders, who intend to cause harm, e.g., activists who seek to disrupt research
2. Coerced or sympathetic insiders who are pressured into harmful actions due to personal or ideological reasons

3. Oblivious insiders who unintentionally create security gaps through everyday carelessness or lack of awareness

The third category is the most frequent. Actions such as propping open doors, sharing access badges, or posting passwords on computer monitors may seem harmless but can significantly undermine facility security.

Another critical area of security involves inventory management. Rethink inventory management to account for missing quantities of hazardous materials which can indicate a potential security threat.

Review of access logs can identify who attempts and fails to enter restricted areas. Failed access attempts, even when innocent, may signal credential misuse, unauthorized activity, or vulnerabilities in the access system.

Cybersecurity is a growing concern. Internet-connected lab instruments, cloud-based data storage, and external software integrations all pose risks if not properly secured. Equipment with public-facing IP addresses creates potential points of entry for cyber attackers.

Emery offers a set of practical measures lab leaders can adopt to enhance both safety and security:

- **Integrate security awareness into safety training.** Educate staff on recognizing suspicious behavior, protecting data, and securing access points.
- **Ask staff about safety and security concerns.** Make this a regular part of walkthroughs and create clear channels for reporting.
- **Inspect labs after hours.** Assess lighting, access, and other potential vulnerabilities that may not be visible during daytime operations.
- **Monitor failed access attempts.** Regularly review logs for unsuccessful access attempts and investigate anomalies.
- **Coordinate terminations with security protocols.** Ensure that badge access and login credentials are revoked promptly when staff leave.
- **Treat chemical inventory as a security function.** Know what substances are stored, where and in what quantities and track them in real time.

Turn your thinking around to consider security as well as safe practices in your workplace to embed security into everyday lab culture.

Resources

- Everett, L. (2025, April 17). *Laboratory security and safety Best practices for modern labs*. Lab Manager. <https://www.labmanager.com/laboratory-security-and-safety-best-practices-for-modern-labs-33888>

2. CUSC September Open Forum Meeting Invitation

The Chancellor's University Safety Committee (CUSC) is a University of Nebraska-Lincoln committee established to assist the Chancellor by making recommendations of methods to reduce safety hazards at the university. The CUSC charter, as well as links to the list of members, upcoming agenda, meeting dates/locations, previous meeting minutes, current year's goal and more are available online.

Twice a year the CUSC holds an Open Forum meeting to which the campus community is invited. The fall **Open Forum** meeting will be held in the Environmental Health and Safety Training room on East Campus and by Zoom. The meeting is from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 16, 2025. The campus community is invited to share concerns or just observe the workings of the CUSC. To attend remotely, contact CUSC Administrative Support, ehowe2@unl.edu for the Zoom meeting link.

While the CUSC is a university-level organization, there are a number of department-level safety committees across campus. If your department does not have a safety committee and you would like to explore possibilities to help institute a safety committee in your department, contact ehowe2@unl.edu for assistance.

Resources

- Chancellor's University Safety Committee <https://ehs.unl.edu/safety-committees/chancellors-university-safety-committee-cusc/>

3. September = National Preparedness Month

September is designated as National Preparedness Month by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Now is a good time to ensure you have an up-to-date building/department/facility emergency action plan in place. The purpose of an emergency action plan is to facilitate and organize employer and employee actions during workplace emergencies.

Does your department/area/facility already have an Emergency Action Plan? 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 or work conducted within. For questions or to submit an updated Plan contact preparedness@unl.edu or Abby Schletzbaum, Emergency Management Director, by email aschletzbaum2@unl.edu or Phone 402.472.7632.

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 other activities during natural or man-made disasters.

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, taking into account your specific work site layout, structural features, and emergency systems. On the SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website, a **Building Emergency Action Plan** template is available to assist you in developing a plan for your department/building/facility is available for download (<https://safety.unl.edu/faculty-staff-departments/>).

All workers should be familiar with their area's 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 disabled co-workers, and so on, they must be trained in those duties as well. In addition to regular review/retraining, make sure that all new workers are trained in the emergency action plan.

The August listserv provided information on AEDs, the PulsePoint® app, CPR and Stop the Bleed®. If you are new to this listserv or otherwise missed the August issue, it can be reviewed online with other past issues at <https://ehs.unl.edu/listserv-past-issues/>.

Resources

- SAFETY AT NEBRASKA website <https://safety.unl.edu/>
- SAFETY AT NEBRASKA printable emergency procedures <https://safety.unl.edu/faculty-staff-departments/>
- EHS **Emergency Preparedness** Safe Operating Procedures <https://ehs.unl.edu/sop-emergency-preparedness/>
- EHS **Emergency Preparedness** web-based training <https://ehs.unl.edu/web-based-training#EP>
- Department of Homeland Security Ready, “Make a Plan” <https://www.ready.gov/plan>

4. National Farm Safety and Health Week (Sep 22-26, 2025)

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 2022 agriculture remained the most dangerous sector in America, with 417 fatalities. Fall harvest time is one of the busiest and most dangerous seasons of the year for the agriculture industry. The National Education Center of Agricultural Safety (NECAS), the agricultural partner of the National Safety Council, has designated September 22-26, 2025, as National Farm Safety and Health Week in partnership with the AgriSafe Network.

This annual observance has been in place since 1944. The purpose of the NECAS in general, and the week in particular, is to call attention to the hazards and risks of farm work and promote safe practices to mitigate those hazards. Agricultural field research is subject to most of the same hazards found in family farm operations.

The theme for 2025 is “Safety First, Avoid the Worst.” Daily emphasis topics focus on a particular hazard area:

- Monday – Equipment & Rural Roadway Safety
- Tuesday – Health & Wellness
- Wednesday – Generations of Farming
- Thursday – Confined Spaces

- Friday – ATV/UTV

The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) has resources available online through their website such as Farm First Aid Kits designed with farm injuries in mind, online safety training and online rescue programs.

The AgriSafe Network, another group focused on farm safety, joins with partners across the United States to raise awareness about the safety and health of people working in agriculture. Visit the AgriSafe Learning Lab for more information (<https://www.agrisafe.org/nfshw/>) and to sign up for webinars. Webinars are free but registration is required.

U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers, funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), has produced safety and health videos related to agriculture and other outdoor activities. Popular topics are grain bins, heat illness, tractor rollovers, livestock safety and needlestick injuries. These videos are available through the U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers YouTube channel.

Additional resources are provided by the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH), a multidisciplinary collaboration of five leading research and health care institutions that work to address existing and emerging occupational health and safety issues in agriculture. A few of the resources are forms and checklists, links to other farm safety organizations, and a hazard evaluation and mitigation tool.

EHS provides resources on a variety of topics relating to safety while conducting agricultural/outdoor operations under the Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) heading **Ag Safety**. Topics include:

- Nebraska Guide G1770 Cleaning Pesticide Application Equipment
- All-Terrain Vehicles
- Animal Feeding Operations
- Grain Bin Safety
- Harvest Safety
- Outdoor Power Equipment Safety
- Sharps Use and Handling with Livestock
- Skid Steer Loaders
- Tractor Safety.
- And more...

Other SOPs relevant to agricultural/outdoor operations are found online in the SOP categories **Heat Stress**, **Landscape**, **Shops**, and **General/Other**.

Resources

- EHS **Ag Safety** Safe Operating Procedures
<https://ehs.unl.edu/resources/safe-operating-procedures/#Ag-Safety>
- AgriSafe Network <https://www.agrisafe.org/nfshw/>
- UMASH Featured Resources <https://umash.umn.edu/featured-resources/>
- NECAS *National Farm Safety and Health Week*
<https://www.necasag.org/nationalfarmsafetyandhealthweek/>
- U.S. Agricultural Safety and Health Centers videos
<https://www.youtube.com/user/USagCenters>

- **The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety** video and webinar series
(<https://www.necasag.org/safetytraining/videosandwebinars/>) provides safety information on a variety of topics such as:
 - Chainsaw Safety
 - Fatigue Safety
 - PTO Safety
 - Farm Electrical Safety
 - Auger Safety
 - Rural Road Safety
 - Unloading and Loading Trailer Safety...and more.

5. Walk Your Way to Safety

Wherever you are walking, into/out of or within your work area, taking a stroll outside during a break or getting from one meeting to another, we are on our feet walking at least part of every day. When walking the potential for a fall is always present.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), walking has been a leading cause of workplace injury for many years. Workers need to think about hazards tied to walking, the same as we would consider any other part of our jobs that pose a safety risk.

Dangers are often tied to distractions, improper footwear, damaged surfaces and poor housekeeping. To stay safe, here are tips to follow:

- Don't read a text message, email or any kind of written material while walking. If you need to do so, step to the side and put your back to a wall while you read.
- Save in-depth conversations for the conference room or a private office not while walking.
- Leave your headphones behind. They block out noises and may prevent you from noticing people or obstacles in your path.
- Watch where you are going. You need to be able to see changes in elevation, cracks or holes in flooring, as well as other hazards.
- Slow down.
- Don't let packages or boxes block your view.

Follow these steps to make sure the next fall injury at the university is not you!

Resources

- Walk your way to safety. (2024, May 17). *Safety+Health*. <https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/25460-walk-your-way-to-safety>

6. Near Misses are Near HITS

The Chancellor's University Safety Committee (CUSC) is reaffirming their goal to focus more intensely on Near Miss/Close Call reporting and to also encourage reporting of unsafe practices. To support that effort, the EHS "*Near Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting Form*" also allows for reporting of unsafe practices. A near miss can also be thought of as a near HIT!

By reporting near misses, "close calls," or unsafe practices, you are contributing to a safer and healthier campus environment. Information reported is shared throughout the University for educational/awareness purposes. Specific identifying information (e.g., names, departments, etc.) is not included in informational publications. Participation in reporting will benefit the entire campus community. Be assured that there is no risk of repercussions for reporting a situation or hazard.

A "near miss" can also be viewed as a "near hit!" History has shown that most incidents resulting in injury or other loss were preceded by warnings or near miss incidents. Next time you see something and think, "This could

have ended up very badly,” report that online to help your fellow workers throughout the university stay safe.

Resources

- Near-Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting Form
<https://ehs.unl.edu/near-missclose-call-incident-reporting-form>

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

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