

**In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv –  
October 8, 2025**

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**1. MSD Injuries in Housekeeping & Other Areas**

According to the National Safety Council, 29.6% of nonfatal work injuries in the United States are caused by Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs), conditions that include sprains, strains, and overuse injuries to the back, neck, shoulders, and upper limbs. MSDs can be caused by awkward postures, heavy lifting and other workplace factors and can lead to pain, stiffness and reduced mobility.

While workers who perform housekeeping tasks are at a higher risk for MSDs, any worker, depending on their work tasks, can be subject to such injury. High pain occurrence comes with the intersection of work pace, risk and organization. General recommendations for reducing MSD risk:

- Use different, or modified tools to decrease force and/or hand, arm and shoulder activity.
- Organize tasks with varying levels of risk to allow for active recovery between tasks that require heavier use of hands, arms, and shoulders with tasks that do not.
- Job stress can contribute to MSDs. Consider using university resources, such as those available through the Employee Assistance Program (<https://eap.unl.edu/>) to help with stress management.
- Nutrition, amount of sleep, tobacco and other behavioral actions can contribute to MSDs. Consider management of these behaviors to minimize the likelihood of an MSD injury at work.

Specific tips for housekeeping workers to reduce MSD injury likelihood (from Washington State Department of Labor & Industries):

- Hold the mop handle almost straight up and down and close to your body. This positioning will help keep your back straight.
- Position the mop head to be 12 to 18 inches in front of your feet.
- Adjust the mop handle to be slightly below your chin when standing up.
- Use a figure-eight motion when mopping to cover a large area.
- Start mopping at the furthest wall and work your way to the exit to prevent slips, trips and falls on wet surfaces.
- Use floor drains to empty mop bucket water instead of lifting the bucket to a sink.
- Keep your back upright as much as possible.
- Rotate between tasks and take breaks.

Think about your job tasks as you may be at risk of MSD if you do not take steps to mitigate the potential for injury.

## Resources

- Janitorial workers and musculoskeletal pain: webinar explores solutions. (2025, March 3). *Safety+Health*.  
<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/26543-janitorial-workers-and-musculoskeletal-pain-webinar-explores-solutions>
- A safer mopping experience. (2025, August 20). *Safety+Health*.  
[https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27204-a-safer-mopping-experience?utm\\_source=sfmc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=safetytipsaug27&utm\\_content=](https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27204-a-safer-mopping-experience?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=safetytipsaug27&utm_content=)
- *MSD Solutions Lab* (an NSC program powered by Amazon). (n.d.).  
<https://www.nsc.org/workplace/safety-topics/msd/resources>. Retrieved September 25, 2025, from  
<https://www.nsc.org/workplace/safety-topics/msd/resources>
- MSD Solutions Lab. (2023). Accounting for Non-Physical Risk Factors in MSD Prevention. In *MSD Prevention Report* [Report].  
<https://www.nsc.org/getmedia/0044e6ca-3075-4473-b9c6-905d94f62cdf/msd-nonphysical-risk-factor-wp.pdf>

## 2. NIH Announces Initiative to Modernize Biosafety Policies

Following is an announcement recently made by NIH:

As the world's largest public funder of biomedical research, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is committed to ensuring that gold-standard science is conducted under gold-standard biosafety conditions. NIH is launching a Biosafety Modernization Initiative – a comprehensive effort to modernize and strengthen biosafety policies, practices, and oversight to keep pace with the evolving risks posed by today's rapidly advancing science and technology.

Nearly 50 years ago, NIH introduced the foundational Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules, which established the biosafety framework for much of today's research. However, the increasingly multi-disciplinary, cross-sector, and global nature of modern science calls for a paradigm shift.

In the coming months, NIH will work closely with the research community and stakeholders to create the biosafety framework of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, NIH will revamp biosafety oversight to address potential risks beyond recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid technologies. At the same time, the widespread use of certain low-risk recombinant technologies may no longer warrant the oversight once deemed necessary, allowing reduction of red tape for some research.

Second, NIH will strengthen partnerships with institutional oversight bodies to empower Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBCs), reinforcing their position as the front lines of biosafety oversight. This will also provide an opportunity for institutional leadership to reassess whether their IBCs are receiving support and resources equal to other institutional committees, such as those who review human subjects research and the care and use of animals.

By leading with these pillars, NIH can usher in a more effective, transparent, and modern biosafety system.

Access the following link <https://osp.od.nih.gov/policies/biosafety-and-biosecurity-policy/#tab2/> to provide ideas on how NIH can safely guide the next 50 years of groundbreaking research to improve health for all.

## Resources

- *NIH launches initiative to modernize and strengthen biosafety oversight.* (2025, September 9). National Institutes of Health (NIH).

<https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/nih-director/statements/nih-launches-initiative-modernize-strengthen-biosafety-oversight>

### 3. 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 harvest must be completed. 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. Prepare for harvest by reviewing these safety tips and others to mitigate potential hazards:

- 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 and taking steps to mitigate hazards helps avoid injuries so you can get the job done.

#### Resources

- EHS **Ag Safety** SOPs list <https://ehs.unl.edu/resources/safe-operating-procedures/#Ag-Safety>
  - **Harvest Safety** [https://go.unl.edu/harvestsafety\\_sop](https://go.unl.edu/harvestsafety_sop)
  - **Tractor Safety** [https://go.unl.edu/tractorsafety\\_sop](https://go.unl.edu/tractorsafety_sop)
- 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>

#### **4. What to Know About EPA Action on TCE**

On December 17, 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) published a rule that essentially banned most uses of Trichloroethylene (TCE). The limited-time, conditional uses authorized under the rule are not likely to apply to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Following publication, USEPA received several petitions and announced that they were reconsidering certain aspects of the TCE rule. It was not clear what aspects of the rule were being reconsidered until USEPA issued an Interim Final Rule on September 17, 2025. It is now clear that all anticipated uses of TCE in University activities are banned, effective September 13, 2025. If you are in possession of TCE, contact EHS (402.472.4925, [ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu)) to arrange for disposal.

#### **Resources**

- EHS Safe Operating Procedure, Hazardous/Radioactive Materials Collection Procedures, [https://go.unl.edu/hazwastecollection\\_sop](https://go.unl.edu/hazwastecollection_sop)
- EHS Spotlight <https://ehs.unl.edu/spotlight/>

#### **5. EHS Needs Your Feedback**

Environmental Health and Safety is committed to excellent customer service and 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/satisfaction-survey-0/>), 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@nebraska.edu](mailto:bosthus1@nebraska.edu) if you would rather communicate directly.

## 6. Revised Biosafety Safe Operating Procedures

Be sure to review any of the following SOPs relevant to your work.

- **Autoclave Operation and Use** <https://go.unl.edu/autoclave-operations-use>  
Updated information.
  
- **Chemical Disinfectants and Biohazardous Materials**  
[https://go.unl.edu/chemdisinfecbio\\_sop](https://go.unl.edu/chemdisinfecbio_sop)  
Updated information on autoclaves and disinfectants.

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

### **Environmental Health and Safety**

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