In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – February 4, 2026

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1. Be 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 University of Nebraska-Lincoln's "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 their department/facility/area 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. Will Your AED Work?

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 used safely 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. If you want to ensure that your AED will work when it is needed be sure to follow all the instructions provided.

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

- 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

3. Anger On the Road

One aspect of distracted driving/bicycling/scootering is aggression on roadways and the resultant anger. Regardless of our mode of transportation we all have experienced frustration and even anger when another vehicle cuts us off, won't allow us to merge, or makes another aggressive or unsafe action. It is important to not let these feelings escalate.

A recent survey by the American Automobile Association finds that 96% of all drivers admit to being aggressive behind the wheel within the last year.

Specific tips to help control road rage are:

- **Stay calm and don't engage** aggressive drivers with eye contact, gestures, or any response.
- **Give space** and let aggressive drivers pass. Keep your distance.
- **Call 911 if threatened** and go to a public place. Do not drive home.
- **Choose time over tension**. Leave early and give space.
- **When starting to feel angry** behind the wheel, take a deep breath and follow the "Three R's" suggested by the National Safety Council.

The National Safety Council provides "Three R's" to help manage anger that can distract as we navigate roadways.

- **Reflect:** Take a mental step back and ask yourself why you're angry and what you can safely do to change the situation.
- **Reframe:** Think about the situation you're in and ask yourself what you need to do to stay in control.
- **Refocus:** Think about something other than what just happened to make you angry and put the situation behind you.

Using these techniques helps retain the self-control necessary to avoid distraction. To avoid being the source of aggravation to others follow the rules of the road and be courteous to others.

Resources

- Feeling angry behind the wheel? Try the 'Three R's.' (2025, December 19). *Safety+Health*. https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27650-feeling-angry-behind-the-wheel-try-the-three-rs

- AAA survey finds nearly all drivers get aggressive behind the wheel. (2025, October 23). *Safety+Health*. https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/27452-aaa-survey-finds-nearly-all-drivers-get-aggressive-behind-the-wheel

4. Last Minute Risk Analysis

The primary event/exposure leading to University of Nebraska-Lincoln worker injuries in the past quarter was Struck By/Struck Against. A mitigation strategy to prevent these types of events as well as others is to get into the habit of always conducting a Last Minute Risk Analysis (LMRA) regardless of how many times you have performed the task or procedure. The LMRA should be performed immediately before the start of work to identify and exclude all potential safety, health and environmental hazards at the workplace. This can be as simple as performing three key steps:

- **Stop.** Pause at the work location before starting to keep safety on top of your mind.

- **Think.** Look for hazards, for example, spills, moving equipment, unsecured items, and assess if existing safety measures are enough. Think about what could go wrong, look for any new hazards and check whether correct tools and PPE are available.

- **Act**. Take preventative measures. If an issue/concern is out of your control, stop working and consult a supervisor.

Do an LMRA immediately before beginning a task and during the task if work conditions or circumstances change. The benefits of LMRA are:

- Prevents routine blindness: Keeps workers from overlooking hazards in familiar tasks.

- Encourages accountability: Everyone becomes responsible for their own safety.
- Captures real-time risks: Identifies hazards that arise after the main planning stage.
- Strengthens safety culture: Embeds awareness and vigilance in daily work.

When done consistently LMRA helps shape safer habits to prevent injury by raising awareness and vigilance.

Resources

- *Last minute risk analysis*. (n.d.). Tennet. Retrieved January 15, 2026, from https://www.tennet.eu/last-minute-risk-analysis-english

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

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