Volume 1 | Issue 2

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear colleagues,

We are excited to introduce the second issue of our Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Newsletter. This issue covers a range of health and safety topics including occupational safety, research and lab safety, hurricane preparedness, risk management, and educational events with IFAS.

Our goal is to keep you well informed and as up to date on safety-related information and programs. If you missed our first EH&S Newsletter, you can download or print it from the EH&S website. Please feel free to share with your team.

Thank you for all your support in keeping the University of Florida community safe.

Regards,
Shailendra Singh

EH&S PARTNERS WITH IFAS FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS

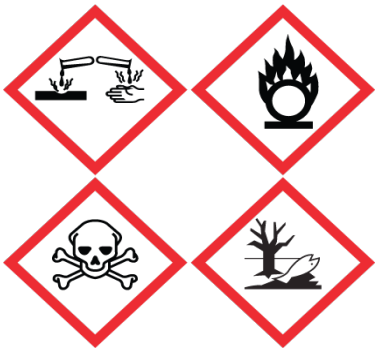
In early May, the EH&S team (Shailendra Singh and John Guerra) joined the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) in providing some educational support during two events (Farm CARES and Community Day) at Suwannee River/North Florida IFAS facility. Over 800 people attended those events and EH&S provided safety tips on ergonomics evaluation and fire safety where they even had a fire extinguisher simulator available for all to learn how to use.

The EH&S team mentioned, “What a fantastic opportunity to partner with IFAS in teaching the local community about safety. **Both events truly showcased not only IFAS and the University of Florida, but the value of their partnership with the local communities.** EH&S is excited to participate in future events with IFAS.”

Bob Hochmuth with IFAS stated, " Having UF EH&S provide a fun and engaging demonstration about fire safety, information for computer ergonomics, and other safety considerations was a great addition to our recent UF/IFAS outreach events. **This reinforces how many different ways UF can connect, partner, and provide valuable information with communities throughout this state**."

IFAS HOMEPAGE

TEACHING MOMENT: LAB INCIDENT



It is important for our research community to learn from any missteps, near misses and incidents to prevent future injuries. A recent laboratory incident highlights failed procedural factors that caused an employee's injury.

A staff member was preparing a fresh solution of aqua regia (a mixture of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid) for the next day and stored the solution in a container with a non-venting lid that was screwed on too tightly.

The bottle pressurized as the reaction progressed causing the solution to gush out of the bottle and spill onto the employee's hand, the fume hood and the floor of the laboratory. The employee was not wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) resulting in a minor injury to the exposed skin.

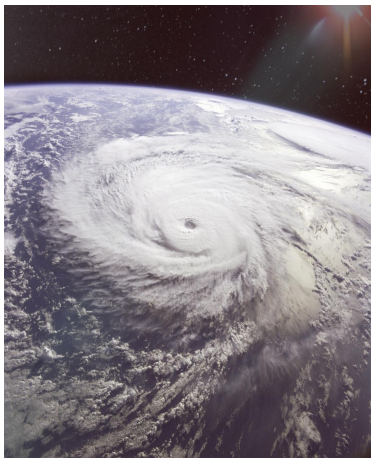
Aqua regia solutions are **extremely corrosive and may result in explosion or skin burns** if not handled with extreme caution. **Users must follow these safety precautions when using aqua regia in a lab:**

- Always work with, and store, aqua regia in a properly working fume hood.
- Mix the solution in a fume hood with a properly lowered sash to protect from any splashes or potential exposures.
- Wear proper PPE (preferably safety goggles or safety glasses, a lab coat and appropriate gloves).
- Always add the nitric acid to the hydrochloric acid slowly and always use glass (preferably Pyrex) containers.
- Never store aqua regia in a non-vented container. Over-pressurization may cause the container to explode or fail.
- Do not store aqua regia for more than a week. It is best to make enough for a specific use, only. Aqua regia quickly loses its effectiveness due to oxidation of its reactive components.
- After the material has cooled, collect the solution as hazardous waste and request EH&S for waste pick up.
- In case of skin or eye contact: flush the affected area with copious quantities of water for at least 15 minutes. Seek medical attention immediately.

Read more about lessons learned at UF.

REPORT AN INCIDENT

HURRICANE SEASON REMINDERS



Hurricane season officially **starts on June 1st and ends November 30th**. As Emergency Management disaster plans are updated, here are some quick reminders that can help with storm preparation and disaster recovery.

Emergency Preparation

- Inspect facilities to ensure there are no existing damages, that roofs and walls are water-tight, and any loose items on the ground are picked up
- Board windows or doors and sandbag areas that are prone to flooding when a storm is imminent
- Track employee days and hours, and equipment used to perform preparation work

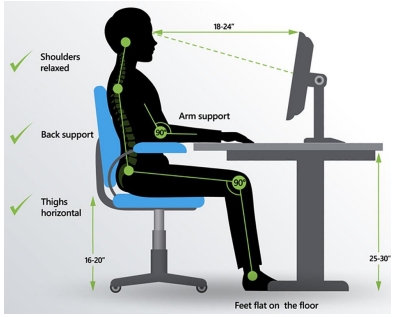
Disaster Recovery

- Document any damages with photos and report them through normal facility work order channels following the storm
- Track all expenses – employees and hours worked, equipment used to clean up and any emergency/temporary repairs, contractor invoices, and material receipts
- Contact EH&S for assistance with filing property insurance claims and FEMA public assistance grants, where applicable

We've weathered more than a few storms together and will face whatever 2022 has in store.

UF STORM READY

WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS



EH&S is committed to providing a safe and healthy living, learning, and working environment throughout the UF community. With that said, **sometimes the smallest aches and pains can simply be avoided with a few minor tweaks at your home or office workstation**. A poorly designed workstation can cause pain in the back, neck, shoulders, hands and wrists, as well as eyestrain and headaches. Ergonomics awareness can help create a more comfortable and productive workstation and help reduce muscle fatigue, discomfort, and potentially serious musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Frequent and short breaks throughout the day may be effective in reducing the incidence of MSDs discomfort during repetitive and static work.

In an effort to reduce workplace injuries, EH&S wants to equip the UF community with some basic knowledge and techniques. Review and print the new Computer Ergonomics Pamphlet or visit our EH&S Ergonomics website to learn more. Please contact us if you have additional questions or need an ergonomic assessment.

ERGONOMICS PAMPHLET

SUMMER HEAT IS HERE

In summer, higher temperatures increase the chances of experiencing heat stress. There are three main types of heat stress:

- Heat rash/ cramps (first signs)
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke (most serious)

Several symptoms of heat stress include **headache or nausea, weakness or dizziness, heavy sweating or hot/dry skin, high body temperature, thirst, and decreased urine output**. The most severe form of heat-related illnesses, heat stroke, is characterized by abnormal behavior, slurred speech, seizures, and/or loss of consciousness. Approximately 75% of occupational heat fatalities occur during the first week of work when employees haven't become acclimated to the heat.

Here are a few ways to prevent heat stress:

- Drink at least one cup of cool water every 20 minutes, even if you aren't thirsty
- Watch others for signs of heat illness, work in pairs
- Find shade or a cool place to take breaks to recover from heat
- Dress for the heat, wear a hat and light-colored, breathable clothing if possible

To learn more about the Heat Stress Prevention Program and training, please refer to the University of Florida Heat Stress Policy or contact EH&S.

Heat stress is truly a medical emergency. Call 911 and cool the person immediately!

HEAT STRESS POLICY

ONLINE TRAINING UPDATES

EH&S has recently updated two existing safety training courses:

1. Hazardous Waste Management Main Campus (EHS809): HazWaste Management training is **required annually for all employees who generate or manage hazardous waste in labs** on Main Campus. This training covers safety and compliance requirements for hazardous chemical waste generated in UF laboratories.

2. General Biosafety (EHS853): Required initially for anyone working or supervising work with **synthetic/recombinant nucleic acids infectious agents, and biological toxins**.

Register for EH&S courses through myTraining.

EH&S TRAINING COURSES

IS IT TIME TO CLEAN YOUR LAB REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER

If you haven't thoroughly cleaned out your lab refrigerators and freezers recently, there is a good chance that they are crowded with old samples and materials you didn't even know you had. There is no time like the present to clean out your refrigerator/ freezers and inventory your biological materials.

Properly dispose of items that are no longer needed or wanted, unlabeled, unknown, or unidentifiable, and expired.

Consider cleaning or defrosting your refrigerators/freezers, if you haven't done so in the last year. As frost builds up in a freezer, it begins to insulate the walls from the cooling elements which may cause the internal chamber to warm. **More frost equates to more temperature fluctuations!**

Once unwanted materials have been disposed of, organize and inventory the remaining materials:

- Clearly label all items.
- Keep an inventory of what is in your freezer and update it on a regular basis – a simple spreadsheet works great! Box maps are highly recommended.
- Minimizing time hunting down samples with the door open not only streamlines your workflow, but also enhances sustainability and may prolong freezer longevity.

Ensure all freezers are labeled with emergency contact details.

ONE GLOVE IT

Reminder: Do not wear two gloves into the hallway.

Wearing gloves in public areas creates a safety and perception issue as gloves may carry contaminants outside of the lab.

Use carts, bottle carriers, or secondary containers when transporting materials outside of the lab. If a glove is absolutely needed, use an ungloved hand to touch common surfaces and a gloved hand to carry the item.

Gloves should not touch door handles, elevator buttons, lavatory faucets, or other common surfaces.

SAFETY REMINDERS

Are you closing, vacating, relocating, transferring, or renovating a laboratory?
Notification to EH&S is required **thirty days (30) in advance.** Please report lab closeout.

Are you planning to purchase lab equipment?
Lab appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, 3D printers, heaters, and microwaves need prior approval from EH&S before being installed in lab spaces. Please use the Equipment Purchasing Approval Form to submit requests.

THE CHERYL THACKER SCHOLARSHIP

The American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) recently announced **The Cheryl Thacker Dive Officer Training Scholarship** recognizing UF Diving Safety Officer (DSO) Cheryl Thacker's accomplishments in advancing and facilitating safe scientific diving. This $1500 scholarship will support the professional development and training of other AAUS diving safety officers.

Thacker has served as the University of Florida's DSO for 22 years. Prior to her tenure at UF, she acted as the Smithsonian Institution (SI) National Museum of Natural History's Diving Officer to train the SI science divers conducting scientific divingmissions globally. From 1987 to 1997, Cheryl was a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps Officer, becoming the first female Executive Officer (XO) and Acting Commanding Officer (CO)-when needed- aboard the NOAA ship Rude. When Trans World Airlines Flight 800 (TWA800) crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near East Moriches, NY, on July 17, 1996, the Rude was assigned to the scene and Thacker, as Acting CO, surveyed the area and located the debris field that was the remnants of the plane.

Ms. Thacker also received many other awards and recognitions, including the American Academy of Underwater Sciences Service Award, NAUI Training Excellence Award, NAUI Outstanding Contribution to Diving Award, American Academy of Underwater Sciences Service Award, and Women Divers Hall of Fame Inductee.

Please join EH&S in congratulating Cheryl on yet another achievement.

READ MORE

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

CONTACT

Eric Brunn

Deputy Building Codes Administrator
Facility Support Services

We are pleased to announce that Eric Brunn has accepted the EH&S Deputy Building Codes Administrator position.

Eric started working at UF in1975 with the Physical Plant Health Center and moved to Utilities at the High Voltage Division in 1983. Eric also worked as an Adjunct Instructor in the Santa Fe Electrical Apprenticeship Program from 1985 to 1988. In 1999, Eric made his final move to UF EH&S as an Electrical Inspector and Plan Reviewer when the Building Codes Department was established. He has continued his professional development by obtaining additional professional licensing as an Inspector and Plan Reviewer for building and plumbing. Recently, he obtained the Building Codes Administrators License.

In his spare time, Eric enjoys fishing, woodworking, and playing with grandchildren.

CONTACT

Christine Lashley

Institutional Biosafety Committee Administrator
Research Services and Safety

We are pleased to announce that Christine Lashley has accepted a new position as IBC Administrator.

In this role, Christine will support the Institutional Biosafety Committee by tracking and managing incoming project applications, renewals, and terminations in addition to providing administrative support to the committee. Christine joined EH&S in October 2020 as the Research Services Program Assistant. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Western Michigan University.

Outside of work, Christine and her husband are busy keeping up with their two daughters and two dogs.

PROMOTIONS

Congratulations on your well-deserved promotion!

Jamieson McMahon
Building Code Inspector II

Robert Gonzalez
EH&S ADA Inspector

Eric Victor
Chief Building Inspector III

EHS.UFL.EDU

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