

Guess who's 5 years old!



That's right... the **OHSU SafetyTeam** is officially five years old, this month!

The SafetyTeam is a cooperative labor management effort, between AFSCME and OHSU, focused on improving health and safety at work. We do this by maintaining talented and educated safety resources throughout all corners of OHSU. This **SafetyNews** newsletter is the official monthly publication of the SafetyTeam. Current SafetyTeam membership is over 150 people and growing!

Recently, President Kohler authored a letter of endorsement and thank you to all SafetyTeam members for their ongoing participation in the program, and members were honored with a blue ribbon to wear on their OHSU photo ID that identifies them as a SafetyTeam member. Look for these for your best local safety resource. If you don't see them, you can always find a member in your area on the O-Zone at: ozone.ohsu.edu/ehrs/mh/pages/safetyteam.shtml



If you would like to become a SafetyTeam member, call 4-2586 today to sign up!

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Shared Successes

The following are interesting progress notes from SafetyTeam members' activities:

- An oxygen cylinder regulator was found to be not working properly in the School of Dentistry. This was discovered during an event that required its use. The regulator has since been repaired.
- Boxes and debris had been found to accumulate under an emergency shower in a hallway in the Basic Science Building. This would block access to the shower during an emergency. A SafetyTeam member reminded all labs in the area of the need for this to remain clear, and the problem now occurs less frequently.
- Several SafetyTeam members noted that the gravel on top of Parking Structure 1 (along Sam Jackson), used to provide traction during the season's inclement weather, is now a slip and fall hazard. Facilities Management agreed to have the gravel cleaned up.

Thanks members... be safe!



Topic of the Month

This month's specialized training topic is a discussion of **Bloodborne Pathogens**.



Why Be Concerned?

If you work with or around blood and body fluids, you may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens, including HIV and hepatitis B and C. All three diseases are caused by viruses that are transmitted through exchange of body fluids.

Most transmission of bloodborne pathogens occurs through risky personal behaviors, but transmission in the workplace is possible if skin is punctured by a contaminated sharp, or broken skin or mucous membrane is splashed with blood or a body fluid.

Needlestick is the most common cause for job-related bloodborne pathogen infections, however many factors affect whether any exposure results in an infection. These include the amount of blood or fluid involved; the severity/depth of the injury; an individual's predisposition to infection; and the disease stage of the source.

Rights

State and Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administrations (OSHA) guarantee your right to a safe workplace. Employees who have contact with blood or other infectious materials have specific rights under OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard, made law in 1991. Included are free hepatitis-B vaccine, personal protective equipment, immediate medical evaluation following exposures, and confidential medical treatment.

OHSU requires that standard precautions be practiced institution-wide; employees must know which materials are potentially infectious; special

containers are provided for sharps disposal; hazards are eliminated, when possible; and employees are trained prior to work, **and annually**, about hazards.

OHSU has policies, and Hospitals and Clinics have Infection Control Plans (503 494-6694) in place that describe procedures in clinical settings. Find the details on the O-Zone or ask Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (503 494-7795).

Responsibilities

- **Always use standard precautions** when working around blood, body fluids, and tissues.
- **Respect sharps**, and use needle safety devices, when possible.
- **Get immunized against hepatitis-B.** Call Employee Health for details at 503 494-5271.
- **Immediately report all exposures** and comply with post-exposure follow-up procedures. **Don't wait...** the time frame for any necessary medical treatment is critical. Reporting is also essential for establishing a claim for Workers' Compensation benefits.
- **Support your peers.** Anyone exposed will need support to understand risks and process.
- **Help "design out" hazards** in your work area to eliminate or prevent exposure to hazards.
- **Be an agent of change.** Be open to new products or practices that could prevent exposures.
- **Annual training** is required of anyone who is or could be exposed to blood or body fluids.

These are the basics.

Questions?

**Ask your supervisor or contact
Environmental Health & Radiation Safety
at 503-494-7795.**

Buying a Chemical?

When you need a chemical, whether it be for some project at work or just cleaning up, who do you buy it from?

Most often, it is from Logistics or Research Stores. Sometimes, you might get it from Fred Meyer, Home Depot, a catalogue, or just bring it from home. Is this a problem? Maybe...

OHSU does not currently have a process for reviewing or coordinating chemical purchases. We may be missing the chance to save some money, **but there may be bigger problems:**

- **The product may be hazardous to your health, and the health of others.** It may not be safe to use around patients. We prefer that you use chemicals that are provided by, and available through, OHSU.
- **The product may not do the job.** This is particularly true for household-use disinfectants. Within the healthcare system, there are only a few approved options that we know to work well.
- **OSHA requires that most chemicals at work have an MSDS available** to all who may use or be exposed to the chemicals. When you get your chemicals outside OHSU, an MSDS is rarely provided.
- **Employees who use chemicals MUST be trained** in their use and hazards, and this training is sometimes overlooked when new chemicals are introduced to a work area.
- **Special disposal may be required for some chemical wastes.** It depends on what chemicals are in the products, but

If you have a need, and you would like some advice or guidance, please call Environmental Health and Radiation Safety at 4-7795.

Q of M Answer!

Last month's Question of the Month was from the Focus Topic, "**Safety of Young Workers.**"

The question was, "**What OHSU departments can help you with a question about work restrictions for young employees?**"

The answer is : **Human Resources, Risk Management, and Environmental Health and Radiation Safety.** These departments will either have the answers or know where to guide you. Whether you are hiring a young person as an employee or just using them as a volunteer, you must understand what the law and OHSU policy allow. This is for the protection of the young worker, and OHSU.

Part of the young person's training should include tasks and procedures, hazards and safety provisions, emergency procedures and contacts, and any limitations. Limits include those which are mandated by the law and those dictated by training and qualifications. Supervision should be constant and appropriate, and supervisors should be familiar with the capabilities and limits of the young worker. Thank you to each of you who participated! If you answered correctly, you earned 1 SafetyPoint! Contact Ben Richards at 503 494-2586 for answers to questions or to check on your SafetyPoint total.

FM&C Corner - Feedback time!

This section typically highlights safety issues related to Facilities Management and Construction.

We need your feedback. Please tell us if you find this section valuable. If not, we may reclaim the monthly space for other safety news.

Construction Questions? Call the Construction Safety Manager, at 503 494-2588. **Concerns?** Call the Construction HELP line at 418-HELP (8-4357).



Slow down in Construction Work Zones!

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Question of the Month

The question of the Month is designed to challenge your safety knowledge and give you a chance to earn some cool, free stuff!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH



What employees must receive annual Bloodborne Pathogens Training?

Write your answer to the question in the appropriate box on your SafetyTeam Member Update form. Correct answers to this month's Question will earn 1 SafetyPoint.

If you are not currently a SafetyTeam member and would like to participate, contact Ben Richards, SafetyTeam Coordinator, at 503 494-7795.

OHSU

OHSU includes four schools; two hospitals; numerous primary care and specialty clinics; multiple research institutes; and several public service and outreach units. OHSU is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution.

The SafetyNews newsletter is a publication of the OHSU SafetyTeam, and is a joint effort of AFSCME and OHSU. ©2005

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