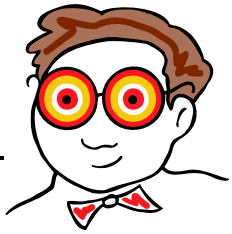
OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

SAFETYNEWS

The Monthly Update for the OHSU SafetyTeam | Editor: Kristine Abrahamson | April 2007

Protect Your Eyes



First Aid for Your Eyes

Do you work with any acids or bases? Do you work with chemicals that could cause eye damage? If so, there should be an eyewash station in your area. It's a good idea to locate your nearest eyewash station just in case of an exposure. Where is yours?

Proper eyewash stations have the ability to operate "hands free" and can flush both eyes at the same time. They are hands-free so that both hands are free to hold the eyes open, allowing the water to flow into the eye. Drench hoses and bottled eyewashes are not appropriate eyewash stations.

On a weekly basis, check plumbed eyewash stations to ensure that they are clean and working correctly. Turn on the water until it flows clearly. In the Hospitals and Clinics, it is required that eyewash stations are checked weekly, and the inspection recorded.

(Continued on page 3)

Inside this Issue:

Shared Success

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

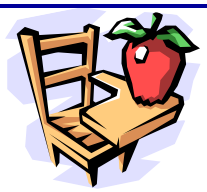
- A safety concern was raised over moving playground equipment from the DCH play structure outside of the gated area. Facilities was asked to modify the gate.
- Loose flooring was reported in Medical Records. Loose flooring can create a trip/fall hazard. Maintenance items can be reported directly to Facilities at 4-8054.
- A SafetyTeam member took the responsibility of cleaning up a water spill in MAC Hall so that others would not slip and fall.
- A staff microwave was moved from overhead to counter height so that staff would not continue to spill hot food on their heads.
- CHH Team Leaders and staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable on the health and safety of their work and their building. During a recent fire drill, one group realized that they needed more team leaders, so will work on recruiting them.

Please continue to submit your monthly member update forms so that your safety concerns continue to be addressed.

Thank you for your participation!

AFSCME Labor/Management Cooperation OHSU

Topic of the Month



This a focused discussion on the safe use of **GLUTARALDEHYDE** liquid. Employees who use this chemical must know about the hazards of exposure, how to use it safely, and how to protect themselves.

WHAT IS GLUTARALDEHYDE?

It is a liquid chemical used to sterilize medical and dental equipment. It is in products like Cidex, Glutarex, and Sonacide, and may be colored green. It may also be used as a chemical preservative.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF GLUTARALDEHYDE EXPOSURE?

Short term (acute) effects: Contact with liquid and vapor can severely irritate the eyes, and at higher concentrations irritates the skin. Breathing glutaraldehyde can irritate the nose, throat, and respiratory tract, causing coughing and wheezing. Exposure to glutaraldehyde can also cause nausea, headaches, drowsiness, and dizziness.

Long-term (chronic) effects: Glutaraldehyde is a "sensitizer," meaning that, over time, some workers may become very sensitive to the chemical and have strong reactions if they are exposed to even small amounts. Workers may get sudden asthma attacks with difficult breathing, wheezing, coughing, and tightness in the chest. Prolonged exposure can cause a skin allergy and chronic eczema, and afterwards, exposure to small amounts produces severe itching and skin rashes.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Employees who use glutaraldehyde to cold sterilize medical, surgical, or dental devices, and where it is used in tissue embalming, during X-ray film processing, and in electron microscopy.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT EXPOSURE ?

Avoid using it. When possible, try using less toxic chemicals or other processes for sterilization.

Use equipment to avoid exposure. Glutaraldehyde should be used in a contained process along with local exhaust or filtered-air ventilation.

Work practices: The following steps can reduce exposure:

- Keep soaking trays covered at all times, in areas with good ventilation. Post signs to remind staff to replace lids after using product.
- Change into clean clothes if clothing becomes contaminated.
- Use an eyewash fountain or an emergency shower if skin or eye contact occurs. Wash or shower for at least 15 minutes to remove chemical, and get immediate medical attention.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The following may be required to protect you from exposure, depending on the task:

- **Gloves** made of butyl rubber, neoprene or nitrile materials. The purple gloves in the Health Care System are adequate for short term use.
- **Protective clothing.** A gown may be necessary in areas of frequent chemical use or instrument processing.
- **Eye protection.** Wear splash resistant safety glasses when working with liquids.
- **Respirators:** If other control measures do not keep exposure below 0.2 ppm, respiratory protection may be required. (NIOSH).

Questions about glutaraldehyde use, hazard assessment, or protective equipment?

Contact
Environmental Health and Radiation Safety
503 494-7795

(Continued from page 1)

While emergency eyewashes are important in the workplace, using safe work practices can prevent the need to use them. Learn about the chemicals and materials you work with by reading the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for information on hazards, precautions, and recommended personal protective equipment (PPE). If you are working with chemicals that can splash or materials that may fly into your eyes, wear safety glasses with side-shields or splash goggles.

If your eyes are accidentally injured, immediately flush them for at least 15 minutes. When you start flushing your eye, hold your eyelids open and roll your eyeballs around to allow the fluid to flow on all of the surfaces of the eye and under the eyelid. Seek medical attention as soon as possible after flushing your eye.

More Safety Glasses Options Now Available

Over the past couple of years, there has been a downward trend in splash incidents in the ICUs as a result of increased use of safety glasses during procedures that pose a high risk for splash exposure.

In an effort to continue to reduce splash exposures, OHSU has expanded the supply of protective safety glasses. Some of the other areas at highest risk include Labor & Delivery, Respiratory Therapy, and the OR environment.

The estimated cost to OHSU of one splash exposure is $1,600. This doesn't take into consideration the amount of emotional anxiety and stress caused when a person is exposed to blood and body fluids.

If you are performing procedures where the risk of splash from blood or body fluids is high, please wear safety glasses. These new styles are available through Logistics.

Getting to Know Your SafetyTeam

I'd like to introduce you to Laurie Charron. Laurie works in the Family Medicine Department as the Department Administrator. Laurie has been a SafetyTeam member for many years, and contributes on a regular basis to the Monthly Member Update.

In March, Laurie asked for advice on various safety concerns. Laurie works in Emma Jones Hall, which is undergoing remodel since the Family Medicine Department moved to the Center for Health and Healing in the fall.

We identified several areas of improvement including fire safety, signage, security and general safety. The biggest improvement made was the removal of the steep ramp in the basement. The ramp was not ADA accessible and we agreed that if the conference room in the basement needed to ac-cessed by someone with a disability, that other meeting rooms in the building were accessible and that the meeting venue could easily be changed. The ramp has been an historical safety concern, and its removal was agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Thanks to Laurie for bringing up these very valid safety concerns! Proactive SafetyTeam members can be very effective in identifying hazards, remediating hazards and making a safer work environment for everyone. Keep up the good work!

OHSU SafetyTeam