OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

SAFETYNEWS

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

FOUND: Dirty Needles

In the past few months, there have been several occasions where dirty needles have been found in unexpected locations. These dirty needles were not disposed of properly, potentially exposing unsuspecting people to infectious diseases.

In one case, a lab moved and dirty needles were left behind. Some were laying on countertops and some were disposed of in regular trash. The dirty needles were discovered when construction and Facilities employees were preparing to clear the space for remodel. Luckily, no one was injured.

In another case, the recycling center's employees were picking up recyclable materials and found dirty needles filled up to 6 inches deep in a bucket. Also, the needles were covered up with several plastic jugs, making them initially hard to see. The recyclers were lucky to have been paying close attention to their work, or they could've mistakenly reached into that bucket and gotten stuck by a dirty needle.

Another employee was not so lucky. She lifted out a full plastic trash bag to replace it. While she was carrying the plastic bag to the dumpster, a dirty needle poked through the bag and stuck her in the leg.

Getting stuck by a dirty needle is tragic, especially when it is unknown if the needle is contaminated. When it is unknown where the needle came from or if it is contaminated, Employee Health follows the protocol as if it was contaminated by HIV or Hepatitis, two common bloodborne pathogens transmissible by needlestick. The cost to OHSU for a needlestick like this is greater than $2000, and worse, the affected employees suffers for months before they know whether or not they've become infected with a disease.

Please remember to dispose of dirty needles and other sharps in proper sharps disposal containers. Sharps disposal containers can be purchased through Logistics or Research Stores.

Please call EHRS at 4-7795 if you have any questions.

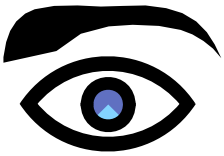
Getting to Know Your SafetyTeam

I'd like to introduce you to Linda Mason. Linda has been a SafetyTeam member for SEVEN years! Linda started out as a SafetyTeam member while working in the old Resident's Hall where she had the opportunity to be the main "go-to" person for all the safety issues there. Linda now works in the School of Nursing as an Administrative Assistant, where she continues to be a Safety Leader.

Linda has a specific interest in the accessibility of OHSU. She is interested to see improvements to wayfinding on campus and also to see how the Physical Access Committee heads up improvements to buildings, access points and maps.

AFSCME Labor/Management Cooperation OHSU

Topic of the Month



This is a discussion of

Eye and Face Protection,

which is part of the **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** guidelines. Safety glasses, face shields, and masks are all examples of PPE. It is important to wear PPE **every time** that a blood, body fluid, or chemical or radiation **exposure is possible**, **not just expected.** This is a conservative approach (sounds like Standard Precautions?), but you never know when an accidental exposure will occur.

Nearly three out of every five eye injury victims were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident. Prevention of eye injuries requires that all people who may be in eye hazard areas wear protective eyewear. This includes employees, patients, visitors, researchers, and contractors.

The basics of eye and face protection include:

- Safety glasses and masks (not including surgical masks) are adequate face protection from blood and body fluids, in many cases.
- Safety glasses and face shields shall be used when there is a hazard from chemical splash.
- Face shields shall only be worn over primary eye protection (safety glasses or goggles).
- Side protectors, on ANSI-approved safety glasses, are required with flying object hazards.
- Contact lenses are **not** adequate eye protection, and may result in additional irritation when worn in contaminated atmospheres.
- For employees who wear glasses, eye protectors shall either incorporate the prescription in the design or fit properly over the glasses.

Appropriate filter lenses shall be used to protect against light radiation. Tinted/shaded lenses are not filter lenses unless they are marked or identified as such.

In addition to knowing what PPE to use, employees must understand how/when to properly use it. **Employees injured while not wearing protective eyewear most often have said they believed it was not required by the situation.** OHSU provides eye protection at **no cost to employees**, and we train employees on where and what kind of eyewear should be used.

Eye and face protection is available in a variety of different sizes and styles, because we know that the number one aversion to wearing PPE is the issue of comfort and fit. PPE is most effective when it fits properly, and simply training employees on how to wear it can increase the protective value of PPE.

Every piece of PPE has limitations as to how effective it is at preventing exposures. In the case of eye protection, there may still be the possibility of liquids, aerosols, and gases passing around the edges of the protective equipment. Employees need to understand these limitations.

Safety glasses and goggles are available through online Logistics Catalog and the Facilities and Real Estate storeroom.

Shared Success

Over the years, SafetyTeam members have been great at reporting safety issues and resolving them. Please continue to both report success and also issues you may need help resolving. We are all encouraged by a job well done and by seeing how problems are solved.

To share a story or report a safety issue, please submit a Monthly Member Update Form which can be found on the SafetyTeam website:

Monthly Member Update