



WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Whistleblower Protection

The Oregon Safe Employment Act gives all Oregon employees the right to a safe and healthy workplace: “The purpose of the Oregon Safe Employment Act is to assure as far as possible safe and healthful working conditions for every working man and woman in Oregon, to preserve our human resources and to reduce the substantial burden, in terms of lost production, wage loss, medical expenses, disability compensation payments and human suffering, that is created by occupational injury and disease.”¹

OHSU strives to give its employees a safe and healthy work environment in accordance with the OSE Act. SafetyTeam members participate in this effort by being the safety experts in their respective areas. The Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Department makes sure that not only all laws are followed, but also helps prevent and fix unsafe conditions. The OHSU Safety Committee tackles OHSU-wide safety improvement projects to better the environment for all OHSU employees, visitors and patients.

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Shared Success

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



- Lights in CEI were reported to be burnt out. Facilities was notified and the lights were replaced.
- To prevent accidental collisions when opening the stairwell fire doors in the SON, a SafetyTeam member initiated the posting of signs warning people to be careful when opening doors.
- To keep up on stock and to prevent improper stocking of linen, Logistics will be instituting a linen cart exchange program. Linen shouldn’t be in violation of the 18 inch rule anymore!
- Hazards discovered by SafetyTeam members in the new CHH were reported to building management for correction, including: door swing direction and trip hazards.
- Restrooms in the SON do not have push button doors for physical access. Items such as these are being prioritized for correction by the Physical Access Committee.

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

Topic of the Month



This month's specialized training topic is **Good Hand Care**.

The number one cause of hand irritation at work is rashes. A few of the more common causes include: overexposure to water, dry air, soaps and detergents, solvents, cleaning agents, latex, and ingredients in skin- and personal-care products. Healthcare, research, and other employees can benefit from good hand health precautions.

Hand Washing

Remove rings prior to washing hands since they trap soap and moisture next to the skin. Use warm water and rinse thoroughly after soaping for 10 - 15 seconds. Apply moisturizer soon after towel drying hands to retain the most moisture in your skin.

Use small quantities of soap, since soap strips natural oils from skin. These oils help your skin retain moisture. Avoid detergents, perfumed and deodorant soaps, as these may actually irritate skin. Regardless of type of soap used, frequent handwashing will cause increased skin dryness.

Hand Sanitizer

Hand sanitizers are a good alternative to hand washing, unless your hands are soiled. (If so, you must wash dirt away with soap and water.) Rub hand sanitizers over skin surfaces until dry. The product approved for use in OHSU hospitals and clinics is Avagard D (available from Logistics).

Lotions and Moisturizers

If hand or forearm skin becomes irritated, lotion should be used after handwashing. The only lotion approved for use in OHSU hospitals and clinics is Cavilon (available from Logistics). Other lotions may be used in non-clinical areas and while

away from work.

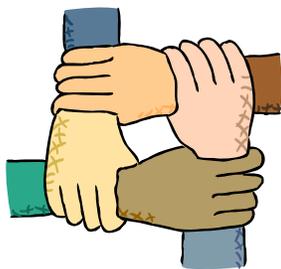
Apply moisturizers liberally after handwashing and immediately after bathing for best moisture retention. When selecting moisturizers, the simpler and messier the better (think petroleum jelly)! Water-based moisturizers are usually the least effective.

Gloves

Nitrile, plastic, and vinyl are easier on hands than latex. Powder-free is less likely to irritate than powdered gloves. Just make sure that you have the right glove to protect you from chemicals and/or biologicals you work with. If you are ever in doubt, seek advice from Environmental Health and Radiation Safety.

Stretching

If you use your hands for fine detail work (e.g.: typing, surgery, hand-writing, etc.), it is important that you take breaks to stretch your hands and wrists. Go through a full range of gentle motions, including flexion, extension, and rotation. These will keep muscles/joints warmed and ready to perform!



Other precautions

- Wear gloves when peeling or pressing oranges, lemons, grapefruits, tomatoes, peppers, or onions.
- Avoid skin contact with solvents, stain removers, fuels, and cleaning products.
- Don't pick at loose skin or cuticles. These are best trimmed using a sharp nail clipper or scissor.

Questions?

Good hand care is essential to preserve your ability to remain comfortable while working. If hands remain dry or irritated for more than a couple of days and attempts to soothe and repair them fail, consult Employee Health at 503-494-5271.

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Sometimes employees may feel that their concerns are not being addressed in a timely manner or they may feel ignored. There may also be times when employees don't have a SafetyTeam member to confide in, or don't feel comfortable talking to their manager. OHSU employees are highly encouraged to use the safety resources available at OHSU to solve any problems they may have. The SafetyTeam, Safety Committee and EHRS are great resources to help bridge the gap between employees and managers and can expertly handle safety concerns. If you are a union member, you may also report safety concerns to your union steward. However, all employees may report unsafe conditions to Oregon OSHA, as is their right given in the OSEAct.

Employees are protected from being discriminated against by their employers when they report safety concerns. Such discrimination may include the following actions:

- Assigning to undesirable shifts
- Blacklisting
- Damaging financial credit
- Demoting
- Denying overtime or promotion
- Disallowing benefits
- Disciplining
- Failing to hire or rehire
- Firing or laying off
- Intimidating
- Transferring
- Reassigning work
- Reducing pay or hours

If you have a safety concern, please first tell your manager. You may also bring concerns to EHRS by calling 503-494-7795.



EHRS can provide direct expert assistance to management.

To find out more about Oregon OSHA's health and safety rules and the services they provide, please reference their website:

<http://www.orosha.org/>

¹: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/ors/654.html>

Getting to Know Your SafetyTeam

I'd like to welcome a new SafetyTeam member, Jackie Dyrhaug! Jackie works as a Laboratory Assistant in the Surgical Pathology Department. The SafetyTeam is fortunate to have Jackie as a member because she is very proactive when it comes to safety.

One example of how Jackie strives to make OHSU a safer place is her initiative in substituting a commonly used, hazardous chemical, for a non-hazardous chemical. About a year ago, Jackie expressed concern about using xylene in her lab space. Xylene has a very strong odor, is a flammable liquid, and can potentially cause health symptoms at high concentrations. Although air sampling results came back low, Jackie moved forward with finding a substitute.



Jackie's experience was a good one. She had no opposition to her ideas and was fully supported by her coworkers and manager. All her coworkers agreed to discontinue use of the xylene and initiated using the new chemical, Slide Brite. She recommended that for anyone who would like to make a change, that they should approach the situation with a positive, can-do attitude. Sometimes making a change takes work and research. When approaching coworkers and management, come prepared to discuss the problem, possible solutions and process for change. Front-line workers are often the most knowledgeable for if a change will work, and what the options are! Just remember to keep a positive attitude.