

The Monthly Update for the OHSU SafetyTeam

November 2006

# Heating Up In Cool Weather

With the seasons changing and cooler weather approaching, this is a good time for a reminder about using space heaters as an alternative heat source at OHSU. Space heaters are allowed in some buildings including: Physical Plant Building, CSB and the School of Nursing. However, space heaters are **prohibited** in all OHSU Healthcare facilities. See a list of these locations at: http:// ozone.ohsu.edu/HealthSystems/Adm10Environ/Adm10-02-08.html. No open element heaters are permitted in any building. In addition to poor efficiency that drives up heating costs, they are very dangerous from a fire safety perspective.

The potential for misuse of space heaters is one of the most significant fire safety issues that arise during the heating season. News media accounts of fires "caused by a space heater", in cases where a product defect is not involved, the cause of the fire may more often be attributed to how the space heater appliance was used and operated. Typical misuses of space heaters that lead to fires include the following:

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#### **Shared Successes**

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

- A water leak was reported in Baird Hall by a SafetyTeam member, and Facilities Management fixed it promptly.
- A SafetyTeam member reported a collection of garbage in a fire exit stairwell of the Multnomah Pavilion to EHRS staff. The garbage was removed.

Please continue to submit your monthly member update forms so that your safety concerns continue to be addressed. Don't forget to answer

the Question of the Month, where correct answers will earn you valuable SafetyPoints!

This past month, several SafetyTeam members redeemed their SafetyPoints for prizes! Thank you!



## Good Job Everyone!



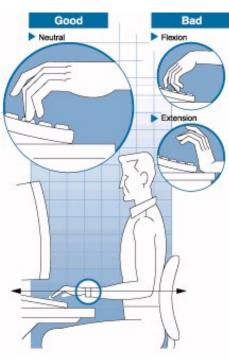
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#### **Topic of the Month:**

#### **Ergonomics at Computer Workstations**

There are several risk factors that increase the chance of injuries while working at a computer workstation. Each of the risk factors described here can cause problems. Workers often are exposed to more than one risk factor at a time. The risk factors that cause most of the injuries and discomfort include:

• **Awkward posture**: Involves the hands, wrists, back and neck:



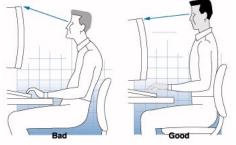
Hands and Wrists: If the wrists are kept flat while typing and mousing, risk of developing tendonitis or other injury such as carpal tunnel syndrome will be reduced. Use of a wrist rest will give the arm and hand the support needed to maintain a flat, or neutral, wrist position.

• **Back Support:** A chair should be designed to adjust correctly to support your stature. The back rest should support your lower back, and the chair should rise high or low enough so that your feet



are flat and firm on the floor. Fully adjustable chairs will also allow a chair to rock, change the position of the seat pan and have height adjustable armrests. OHSU has a list of recommended chairs and keyboard trays. Please call EHRS for assistance.

• **Head and Neck Position:** The position of the neck and head is important to prevent pain in the



neck and shoulders while computing. Sitting straight and using the back rest to support the lower back will encourage neutral posture of the

neck and head. The monitor height should be adjusted accordingly, as pictured above.

- **Repetition**: When repeating the same motion continuously over a period of time, there is a higher likelihood of developing an injury.
- **Duration**: Working for long periods.
- **Lack of Recovery**: Working with a computer without enough breaks.
- Force: The effort it takes to move or remain in a fixed position. Another type of force, known as contact stress, comes from pressure against a part of the body. For example, resting the wrists against a hard and/or sharp edge of a desk while working at a computer puts pressure on the wrists.
- Uncomfortable Environment: Includes poor air quality, improper lighting, glare, noise and other conditions.
- Organization of Work: Includes factors such as staffing levels, scheduling, workload and job pacing, performing monotonous tasks, and the amount of control workers have over how they perform their jobs.



NEW! The Ergonomics Website has been updated to better serve you! On the Ergo

Website, you can now watch videos how to adjust your chair and keyboard tray.

Check it out at:

http://ozone.ohsu.edu/ehrs/mh/pages/gen/ergo/ergo.shtml

- Failure to maintain a clearance of combustible furnishings and materials from the space heater. In most cases, a minimum recommended clearance is at least 36 inches from adjacent Class A ordinary combustible materials such as cardboard, paper and fabrics.
- Use of damaged power cords, constricted power cords (resistance heat build-up), extension cords, and faulty plugs.
- Electrical overloading on receptacles and branch circuits.



- Unattended use of a space heater for a continuous period of time.
- Physical damage to the heater itself during use.

Be safe this heating season and call EHRS at 4-7795 for additional guidance.

# Fire Extinguisher Types

What type of fire extinguisher is in your work area? Most areas have ABC Type Fire Extinguishers. ABC fire extinguishers are general purpose extinguishers and will put out most fires. However, in some areas of OHSU, there are special hazards, and different types of fire extinguishers are necessary. Some types you may find around are:



- Foam: intended for use on fires that involve flammable and combustible liquids.
- Halon: used on fires that involve energized electrical equipment.
- Class K: used on fires that involve vegetable and animal oil. These are found in the kitchens.
- Water: water extinguishers are found in areas that have only combustible materials, like paper and cardboard.

## Q of M Answer!

Last month's Question of the Month was from the Focus Topic, "Bloodborne Pathogens."

The question was,

"What is the most common cause of occupational-related bloodborne pathogen infections?"

The answer is.... NEEDLESTICK!

To report exposures, please go directly to the ED or Employee Health.

Thank you to everyone who participated! If you answered correctly, you earned 1 SafetyPoint! Contact Kristine Abrahamson at 503 494-0215 for answers to your questions.

# Hand Washing Helps Prevent Flu

It is vital that for good hygiene, health, and safety that you keep your hands clean. Numerous studies show that proper hand hygiene reduces the spread of viruses (like flu!) and bacteria. For proper hand washing technique, the following procedure should be followed:

- Wet your hands with warm (~100-120°F) water.
- Use soap to build up a good lather.
- Wash both hands and fingers together thoroughly up to the elbows for 15-20 seconds.
- Consider using a nailbrush to scrub nails.
- Preferably, rinse and wash hands again.
- Dry your hands with an air dryer or a paper towel.



• Turn off water faucets with towel used for drying hands after washing to prevent cross-contamination.

#### **Environmental Health and Radiation Safety - Safety Team**

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### Yield to Pedestrians! It's the Law.



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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!



What is the OZONE link for the new OHSU Ergonomics Website?

Write your answer to the question in the appropriate box on your Monthly Member Update Form: <a href="http://ozone.ohsu.edu/ehrs/mh/pages/safetyteam/mmuf.shtml">http://ozone.ohsu.edu/ehrs/mh/pages/safetyteam/mmuf.shtml</a>. Correct answers to this month's Question will earn 1 SafetyPoint.

If you would like to become a member, contact Kristine Abrahamson, SafetyTeam Coordinator at 503 494-7795.



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.

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