Welcoming Newcomers To Safety

EHSI is happy to see so many new faces in the primary safety role at colleges throughout the state. Almost 20 colleges have seen new leaders take over the helm of campus safety. We are looking forward to assisting them with training, inspections, and all matters related to occupational safety.

New Service Request Procedure coming in June In an effort to simplify our scheduling process and ensure we can effectively provide all services requested, the Environmental Health and Safety Institute will be introducing an enhanced information and service request process this June. The link to the form will be sent to you via email and will be requesting a wide variety of information about your college, and the services you feel will be most useful to you. Colleges will be able to schedule services far in advance if needed, but EHSI will still be available for visits on short term notice. EHSI is also available to provide enhanced hazard awareness training, including the OSHA 10 hour course, for colleges’ safety committee/team members. We can schedule mini events for your college and other nearby schools that would also like to participate. If you would like to EHSI to consider hosting a safety training workshop at your college, please contact us at ehsi@blueridge.edu Our services are always just a phone call away. We hope that you will take the time to carefully fill out the information and get it sent back to us by the middle of July. We are looking forward to our most successful year ever!

Limit Chemical Exposure

Hazardous chemical exposure is a serious concern for almost every company or group in the OSHA General Industry category. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels has said current OSHA Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) “do not adequately protect workers”. Most of the PELs now in use are 40 years old and have not been updated. “As a result, workers suffer more than 190,000 illnesses and 50,000 deaths annually related to chemical exposures.”¹ Workplace chemical exposures have been linked to cancers, and other lung, kidney, skin, heart, stomach, brain, nerve, and reproductive diseases.² Since chemical exposure can be such a serious and deadly situation something should be done now to address the issue rather than wait for OSHA or North Carolina OSH to update or revise the current PELs and standards. I am sure we are all aware of companies or people who follow the standards exactly as written and no further. But is that the best...
practice for our employees? Should or could we go further and use the latest consensus information available about hazardous chemicals and exposure, to make our work places safer for our employees? Maybe the consensus information will recommend a different chemical or a reduced PEL (less than the OSHA PEL). As safety professionals what should we do? Remember OSHA’s methods used to control hazards – Engineering controls, Administrative controls and PPE. The Engineering controls and Administrative controls can help eliminate or reduce the hazards. OSHA has developed a seven step plan to transition to safer chemicals in the workplace. They feel the plan will lead to cost savings, efficiency, leadership and stewardship. Along with the plan OSHA has developed an Annotated PEL table that lists the voluntary limits from other organizations (Cal/OSHA, NIOSH and ACGIH) to compare with the current OSHA PELs. Using these tools you can evaluate and hopefully replace many hazardous chemicals with less hazardous chemicals.

If the OSHA tools were used mainly in the chemistry labs on all campuses many employees would have a safer work environment. The OSHA plan to transition to safer chemicals and the annotated PEL table are voluntary and OSHA will continue to enforce current PELs. The PELs will be updated, but here is an opportunity to be proactive and ahead of the curve in addressing employee chemical health hazards. The steps for Transitioning to Safer Chemicals and the Annotated PEL table can be found at www.osha.gov/dsg/safer_chemicals/index.html & www.osha.gov/dsg/annotated-pels/index.html.

¹ This number is derived using the methodology from "Green Chemistry in California: A Framework for Leadership in Chemicals Policy and Innovation," to estimate illness and deaths attributable to workplace chemical exposures. ² Dr. David Michaels quote transitioning to safer chemicals.

Are You Pedestrian Aware?

Spring is officially here, and with the increase in temperature your campus will be seeing an increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Walking is excellent exercise and has been proven to have many health benefits including reducing the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Unfortunately when students are hurrying to classes or walking across the street for lunch they are more vulnerable than anyone else on the road. According to the US Department of Transportation, one pedestrian is killed every two hours and 460 are treated for accident related injuries in emergency rooms every day. Sadly North Carolina is one of the least pedestrian friendly states. The North Carolina DOT reports that each year more than 2,400 pedestrians and 960 bicyclists are hit by vehicles, resulting in 160 pedestrians and 20 bicyclists killed each year. Many of these accidents could have been avoided with a better awareness of traffic laws and individual responsibilities. Some often violated traffic laws include those where pedestrians and cyclists are not given the right of way. In North Carolina pedestrians have the right of way at all intersections and driveways but must yield to
There has been a lot of attention devoted to ergonomics lately. For office workers, setting up your desk and work area correctly can mean significant benefits. Pains and strains in our wrists, arms, backs, and shoulders can be relieved by correcting our desk posture. Recently, The Vision Council released a study citing that 70% of adults surveyed have experienced digital eye strain. Digital eye strain is described as, “The physical discomfort felt by many individuals after two or more hours in front of a computer screen”. Symptoms include, eye redness or irritation, dry eyes, and blurred vision. General fatigue with back and neck pain and headaches are also reported. Digital eye strain is not a permanent condition and can be lessened by taking the following eye-ergonomic tips.

Adjust the brightness of your screen and change the background color to a cool gray. Increase the text size if necessary. Keep the screen clean to reduce glare.

The screen should be directly in front of you and slightly below eye level. Don’t sit too close to the screen. With your arm extended, the flat palm of your hand should rest comfortably on the screen surface. Lower the amount of overhead and surrounding light that is competing with the screen. Try to blink more, to keep your eyes moist. Take a 20-20-20 break. Every 20 minutes, look at something at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds, to refocus your eyes. Incorporate eye-ergonomics into your office ergonomics and take care of your eyes. The complete study by The Vision Council can be found at www.thevisioncouncil.org
**ASK EHSI**

**Question:** Some of the mechanical rooms are being used for storage. One room is so cluttered with junk you can hardly get through. We have since cleared this room. I know that electrical panels are not to be blocked, and exit doors are not to be blocked, but does OSHA cover anything about these rooms being utilized for storage?

**Answer:** At 1910.269(k)(2)(ii) OSHA states *in areas restricted to qualified employees, material may not be stored within the working space about energized lines or equipment.* That means storing office supplies in an electrical equipment room is a violation. If flammable liquids were found to be stored in a mechanical room for example; this could be considered a “Serious” OSHA violation.

### EHSI CONTACT INFORMATION

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### EHSI SafetyNet Training Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>(all training starts at 10:00 a.m.)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Groundskeeper Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-20</td>
<td>Indoor Air Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-3</td>
<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-17</td>
<td>Heat Stress</td>
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<td>7-8</td>
<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>Electrical Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-5</td>
<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness</td>
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