

CWRU DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

NEWSLETTER



December 2002-January 2003 "Safety Comes First"

Service Building, 1st Floor (216)368-2906/2907 FAX: (216)368-2236 <http://does.cwru.edu>

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* Comments/Information for the Newsletter?
-Email bjr8@po.cwru.edu

New D.O.E.S. Rad Resources

There are a number of exciting new D.O.E.S. resources that you should be aware of.

Specifically, the new Radiation Safety On-line Database offers lab-specific, up-to-date information and is just a click away at <http://does.cwru.edu>. From this portal, you can look up such information as

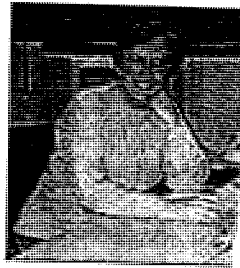
- Your Primary Investigator Number
- Lab Worker List and Training Dates
- Isotope Inventory and Possession Limits
- Laboratory Locations and Status
- Radiation Monitor Calibration Dates
- Sealed Source Information
- Active RAM Inventory

To log on, you will need your P.I. number (which you can look up without a password). For the other features, a password should already have been mailed to you; if you have lost it, email us at does@po.cwru.edu or call 368-2906.

From this new, Helix-based portal, you can check your training record (rad retraining must be done annually) as well as your inventory (which should be checked before ordering additional isotopes). Also, you can conveniently check the status of your radiation monitor, which must be calibrated annually.

Please take a few moments and familiarize yourself (and your lab) with this helpful new resource. If you see discrepancies or need to update your information, contact us.

D.O.E.S. Appoints New Asst. RSO Karen Janiga



We are happy to announce the promotion of Karen Janiga to Assistant RSO. Karen has worked in our Radiation Safety Program at CWRU for ten years following over twenty years of experience as a research assistant in research laboratories. For the past two years, Karen has been the operational Manager of the D.O.E.S. Radiation Safety Programs. She brings patience, detailed knowledge of radiation safety procedures, long experience with our investigation and many fresh ideas to her new position. Please join me and the entire staff of DOES in enthusiastically supporting Karen in her new position.

-David Sedwick, Director of
D.O.E.S.

State of Ohio Waste Log Requirement

The State of Ohio regulations are requiring that generators and their satellites (laboratories) keep leakage logs for the storage containers used for chemical waste. Therefore, Safety Services is requiring all laboratories generating chemical waste to keep a log that consists of weekly inspections of all containers containing waste.

The log must be in a bound book (not a binder) with dates of inspections, name of inspector, and the status of the waste container at that time (acceptable or leaking). It is suggested that each primary investigator choose a member of his staff to conduct the weekly inspection and to keep the log in the laboratory area so that Safety Services can also audit these logs at inspection time.

EPA Fines Universities

Columbia University, Long Island University and New Jersey City University are now facing a total of \$1.1 million in fines due to violations of EPA hazardous waste regulations. "These complaints and penalties highlight the real benefits of the self-audit and disclosure programs that EPA is promoting at colleges and universities . . . "we will continue to inspect institutions that are not taking part in them" said EPA Regional Administrator Jane M. Kenny. The fines resulted from the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which ensures that hazardous waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner from "cradle to grave." According to the civil action filed, Columbia will be fined \$584,158 for failing to minimize the risk of fire, explosion and/or the release of hazardous chemicals into the environment. Additional charges allege that Columbia failed to determine whether the solid waste it generated was hazardous, and failed to close, safely handle, and store hazardous waste containers.

The importance of this log cannot be overstated. Similar to the label on hazardous waste on each waste container, failure to check the log can result in a substantial fine to each investigator for each compliance. It is Safety's goal to keep all laboratories in compliance with uninterrupted research because of EPA error. have any questions, please feel free to call Richard Dell at 368-2907.

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Radiation (x2906)

- New Training: (check website)
- Retraining: (check website)
- X-ray Training: (call for times)

Chemical (x2907)

- OSHA Lab Standard: Tuesdays 1-2:00 (Service Building Conference Room)

Bloodborne Pathogen (x2907)

- New Training: Tuesdays 3-5:00
- Retraining: (call for times)

*Rad Training is at [http:// does.cwru.edu](http://does.cwru.edu)

Depression: Know the Signs

Cold weather and a new year mean one thing for northeast Ohio: winter. But these things also signify the return of seasonal affected depression.

At a university setting, this is especially prevalent, and sadly, sometimes dangerous. According to the National Mental Health Association, it is estimated that approximately 1.5 million college students have experienced depression on America's college campuses, while suicide, often a result of the most severe cases of depression, has climbed to become the third leading cause of death among college students. During the winter months (and especially during exams) suicide rates jump; CWRU is no exception.

The warning signs of depression may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a persistent sad or anxious mood;
- feelings of hopelessness, guilt;
- loss of interest in nearly all activities,
- low energy;
- trouble focusing, concentrating, or making decisions;
- difficulty connecting with friends and family; and, in severe cases, thoughts of death or suicide.

Left untreated, depression can have a major impact on a student's academics and his or her social life, not to mention the obvious, more devastating ones.

As instructors or staff members, it is perhaps not our job to counsel our students, **HOWEVER** sometimes we might be the only ones who can catch these early warning signs. If you see the above warning signs in a student do not hesitate in exploring it further -- meet

continued on pg. 4



RADIATION NEWS

Non-Ionizing Radiation: Lasers

Lasers might not immediately spring to mind as the most harmful source of radiation you can work with, but they do present a potential for injury.

The principal danger from any laser is to the eye. While this varies in degree depending on the power of the laser, the main cause of danger is through simple heating caused by the light energy being concentrated in a small, absorbing spot. Do not look directly into any laser, visible or otherwise. In a laboratory setting, always wear protective eyegear.

The most common form of the laser is the laser pointer, often a helpful tool for lectures, labs, or even just pointing out a reaction. However, increasing numbers of irresponsible usage are being reported on college campuses. The typical laser pointer has a power output of 5mW or less; by comparison, a fluorescent lamp has a power rating of 40W. But what makes the laser potentially dangerous to the eye and vision is the fact that its power is concentrated in a narrow beam.

If flashed in the eye, look away and close your eyes for a moment. There may be afterimages that interfere with your vision, but these should fade and cause no permanent retinal injury. If impaired vision continues over a period of time, seek a physician.

We must emphasize that laser pointers are not toys. Staring into the beam or directing the beam into another's eyes can result in permanent damage. **NEVER** shine one at a student in lecture. Accidents can happen easily when speaking and gesturing, so be aware. This is an actionable offense and in some states has even been classified as criminal assault.

Allergic to Latex?

We are all aware that gloves are an integral part of PPE in laboratory situations. But when you take your gloves off, are your hands red and itchy? Do you sometimes get a runny nose or sneeze around your gloves? You may be allergic to latex.

Latex allergy is an **extremely common** reaction to certain proteins in natural latex rubber. While many experience a contact dermatitis of dry skin, this is not a true allergy, which manifests as several symptoms and must be diagnosed by a doctor.

Mild reactions range from itching to redness while more severe symptoms may involve asthma or even shock. Even if you aren't wearing gloves, latex proteins can become fastened to the lubricant powder used in some gloves and can become an airborne inhalant. The best way to avoid latex contact dermatitis is to follow these guidelines:

- Use nonlatex gloves for activities that are not likely to involve contact.
- Latex gloves should **not** be used for chemical protection, and are not appropriate for handling infectious materials. If you choose latex gloves, use only powder-free gloves with reduced protein content. So-called hypoallergenic latex gloves do not reduce the risk of latex allergy. However, they may reduce reactions to the chemical additives in the latex (i.e. allergic contact dermatitis).
- After removing latex gloves, wash your hands with a mild soap and dry thoroughly.
- Practice good housekeeping: Frequently clean areas and equipment contaminated with latex-containing dust in order to reduce the risk of airborne inhalants.

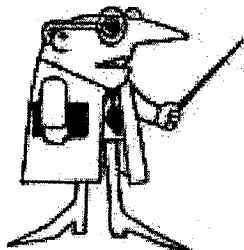
If you feel you might have a latex allergy, consult Health Services and follow the above steps to avoid unnecessary exposure. **ALWAYS observe proper PPE procedures; if an allergy prevents you from wearing gloves, find an alternative and DO NOT CARRY OUT THE PROCEDURE UNTIL YOUR ALLERGY PROBLEM IS ALLEVIATED.**

Depression, *continued from pg. 3*

with that student. If the student is failing (or putting too much pressure on themselves -- most suicide attempts involve "A" students) -- do anything you can to diminish the effect of grades on them. Sometimes this can be a reassuring voice or a personal anecdote about your own college exploits. Remember how subjective the academic experience often is. The same goes for graduate students, staff members, and faculty.

If you suspect a student, co-worker, or yourself may be exhibiting signs of real depression, and you need help in dealing with it, **CALL** the University Counseling Service. They can specifically coach you on how to deal with a student in a trained, professional manner. Gone are the days when a social stigma was attached to taking an interest in someone else -- the UCS sees hundreds of students and faculty every year. They are located in the Sears Library Building on the 2nd floor and may be reached at 368-5872. Also visit their website at <http://www.cwru.edu/stuaff/ucs/> which offers a variety of accessible information as well as a free online depression screening to help aid in prevention. All information you exchange with UCS IS confidential.

Ask Dr. Goggles



Dear Doctor Goggles:

I have a friend at another university who had a problem with a natural gas leak. We have a detector but how can I monitor this? Is this a danger at home?

Later,
Afraid of Gas

Dear Mr. Afraid of Gas:

An excellent question. Yes, with the reliance of laboratories on natural gas for various heat production experiments, a leak can become dangerous very quickly. Most of this is due to the close confinements of a laboratory setting. To detect a gas leak, you should either A) smell the rotten, egg-like odor added for you to sense it or B) you may hear a hissing sound if one of your valves is not entirely closed.

If this is simply a half-closed valve, close it all the way and ventilate the room. But if the smell persists (or your detector goes off) evacuate immediately. Do not turn the light (or anything else electrical) on or off or light a match -- leave. Call Emergency Services immediately. If you feel you have inhaled amounts of gas, breathe deeply in the open air.

Since there can be numerous natural gas outlets at home, this is another place to be cognizant of the dangers of a leak. Install U/L-approved detectors **anywhere** there is the possibility of a leak: near ovens, stoves, or water heaters. Do **NOT** install them behind curtains, in corners, or within twelve inches of door, vents, or windows. Test them regularly to make sure they are operable. In the event of a leak, follow the same guidelines: evacuate and call 911.

Tales from the LAB . . .



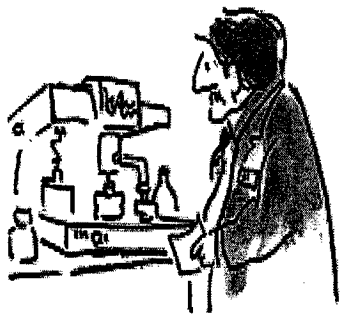
A frequent guest to a lab (and otherwise great collaborator) was melting some agar in a laboratory microwave and failed to loosen the top of the glass bottle sufficiently. Satisfied that the microwave would do its work, the guest wandered off to a corner of the lab to look at the latest edition of the Newsletter, which had been conveniently posted on the wall. But physical forces being what they are, pressure built up in the bottle until it exploded. The force of the explosion ripped the door off the microwave and sprayed glass fragments through three rooms. Luckily (perhaps because he was reading the well-placed Newsletter . . .) the guest did not suffer any injuries other than great embarrassment and extreme gratitude for the distraction of the Newsletter). The lessons here are many: 1) make sure there are no closed systems when heating in a microwave, 2) watch what you're doing (if he saw the bottle shake, he could have turned the microwave off in time), and 3) post the Newsletter in a public place in your lab :).

D.O.E.S. Food Patrol. . .

The D.O.E.S. Food Patrol is on the prowl -- this means no food in ANY labs (this includes leftover holiday cookies, eggnog, and/or fruitcakes) -- we will confiscate anything we find and destroy it as contaminated material. We hope you had a fun and festive season, but keep your culinary celebrations to appropriate areas. Also: remember to lock your lab and any hazardous materials if leaving for any reason.

THE BIOCHEMIST
AT WORK

A trace of saturated fat... very bad.



THE BIOCHEMIST
AT LUNCH

I'll have another order of fries.



D.O.E.S. STAFF

- Dr. W. David Sedwick (wds), Director and RSO
- Richard Dell (rxd7), Asst. Dir., Safety Services
- Richard Harley (rxh2), Loss Prevention Specialist
- Karen Janiga (kej2), Assistant RSO
- Todd Crawley (tac9), Facilities Manager
- Felice Thornton-Porter (fst2), Q.A. Specialist
- Shirley Mele (smm5), Dept. Administrator
- Gwendolyn Cox-Johnson (gxc13), Dept. Asst. 2
- Virginia LaGuardia (vfl), Dept. Asst. 1
- Brad Ricca (bjr8), Technical Writer
- Chemical Safety
- Robert Latsch, Specialist I (rnl2)
- Marc Rubin, Engineer II (mdr6)
- Clinton Giannetti, Specialist I (cmg4)
- Mahdi Fahim, Specialist I (mhf6)
- Jennifer Bambeck, Specialist I (jab41)
- Radiation Safety
- Yelena Neyman, Specialist I (yxt13)
- Joanna Bielawski, Specialist I (jxb153)
- Henry Wayne Justice, Specialist I (hwj)
- Cheng Zhou, Specialist I (cxz16)
- Ed Traverso, Specialist 2 (ejt)

Happy New Year
from D.O.E.S.

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