New Web-Based Chemical Inventory System

A new online, web-based chemical inventory system is in the process of being implemented for the university. The system is called EHS Assistant and will be the official university system for submitting chemical inventories to OEHS. Researchers and chemical users will be able to go online throughout the year to view and update their chemical inventory directly.

The system is easy to learn, with online documentation and help, technical assistance, and on-site instruction by OEHS personnel as needed. The system is currently being tested by several selected researchers who will provide feedback on the new system including what works well and what doesn’t. Once feedback is obtained from this initial group, the remaining community of Tulane researchers and chemical users will be contacted with directions for registering and accessing the new system.

For technical questions on the new EHS Assistant program, please contact Steve Garcia at 988-2871 or spgarcia@tulane.edu. For general questions regarding chemical inventory, please contact Pam Fatland at 988-2800 or pfatlan@tulane.edu.

Food Safety & On-Campus Food Service Events

As we anticipate the arrival of spring, and the ensuing warm weather activities, the OEHS would like to remind those who wish to hold on-campus food service events that they must first gain OEHS approval for their event. (Note: This does NOT apply to on-campus food service events that are catered by any of the on-campus restaurants or any other licensed catering company.)

If you plan to hold (or know of a student organization that plans to hold) a non-catered food service event, please visit the “Food Safety and Sanitation” section of the OEHS website found at http://tulane.edu/oehs/oceansafety/foodsafety.cfm. Here you will find plenty of links to helpful food safety information as well as our “Application and Guidelines for On-Campus Food Service Events” which must be completed and submitted to the OEHS at least (5) days prior to the proposed event.

Upon submission of the completed application, a representative of the OEHS will follow up with you by telephone or email to clarify details of your event and to discuss any pertinent food safety issues. Please contact Michael Kopaigorodsky (mkopaigo@tulane.edu) or (504) 234-6964 with any questions.

2010 OSHA Summaries of Work-Related Injuries & Illnesses

As required by federal law, the OSHA Form 300A “Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses for 2010” for Tulane University must be posted for all employees. It must be posted starting Feb 1 through April 30, 2011. A campus-wide summary as well as summaries for the three major campuses (TUHSC, TNPRC & Uptown) are available at http://tulane.edu/oehs/posters.cfm. For more information, contact Mitzi Hithe at 988-2866 or mhithe@tulane.edu.
Preventing Health & Safety Impacts of Building Construction and Renovation Activities

Construction and renovation activities can introduce a variety of potential environmental, health, and safety issues. These issues may include, but are not limited to, dust and debris; asbestos; lead-based paint; mold; air pollutants from paints, sealers, glues, varnishes, urethanes and roofing materials; diesel exhaust; carbon monoxide; accumulated bird droppings; noise; fire safety; electrical hazards; slips, trips, and falls; etc. If the construction work or renovations are conducted by outside contractors, additional hazards may also be encountered. For example, chemicals brought to the worksite may result in hazard communication and uncontrolled release issues. Other issues may include contractor tools and special equipment (like cranes and manlifts), welding and hot work activities, poor housekeeping, and lack of required permitting/regulatory compliance. In some situations, contaminants may be transported to other areas via the HVAC systems, wind direction, or individuals themselves and subsequently affect populations beyond the immediate project area.

The OEHS is available to work with university Facilities Services, Capital Projects, Plant Operations, Architects, Engineers, or other individuals responsible for overseeing construction and renovation activities at the university, as well as with outside contractors. OEHS can assist in identifying potential hazards and can design strategies and options to control potential environmental, health, and safety issues associated with construction projects. In most instances, university policies and procedures require that the OEHS be involved in construction and renovation projects. This is to ensure that regulatory requirements associated with construction and renovation activities are met; potential fines, violations, and citations by outside regulatory agency are prevented; liability issues due to worker injuries or exposures to other building occupants are minimized; and that the university assets, campus community, and the surrounding environment are kept safe. One key element to preventing or controlling health and safety problems during and after renovation and construction activities is to involve the OEHS during the planning phase of the operation. The OEHS can assist with:

- Construction and renovation plans review to ensure the area is designed according to specific codes and regulations
- Contractor approvals and selection
- Project coordination and supervision
- Outside regulatory agency inspections
- Project design specifications development, contract review, and appropriate contract language
- Grant and research application review to ensure environmental, health & safety compliance
- Occupant notifications and communication
- Scheduling to minimize occupant exposure
- Selection of building materials
- Special equipment purchases and approvals
- Protection of building systems and furnishings, including the ventilation system
- Use of isolation techniques including safety barriers and negative pressure
- Ventilation and filtration requirements
- Work practices and housekeeping
- Proper material storage
- Close-out and commissioning criteria
- Property acquisition inspections and Phase I and II environmental site assessments
- Exposure monitoring
- Selection of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Worker and environmental safety
- Safety training

The above listing does not include all of the services that the OEHS can provide. The department is staffed with individuals with many years work experience in the field of environmental, health, & safety along with various degrees, credentials, and expertise and knowledge in a wide range of environmental, health & safety areas. Help us help you with your environmental, health, and safety needs during construction and renovation projects. By calling the OEHS at (504) 988-5486 and involving the office during the planning phases or if an issue arises, we can assist with identifying certain conditions and needs that will ensure a safer environment for all.
Funding Approved for Eyewash Units, Air Flow Monitors

The OEHS has announced that funding has been approved by the Tulane University Administration for two projects. These one-time projects involve the installation of permanent eyewash units in laboratories or other areas, and airflow monitors for laboratory fume hoods. The eyewash unit project applies to locations where hazardous chemicals or materials are used which may be injurious to the eyes. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations require suitable flushing facilities in these locations. The airflow monitor project involves the installation of airflow alarms on existing fume hoods which currently do not have audible alarms.

During their annual inspections, OEHS staff members have observed improper eyewash units in several laboratories. Some of these have been wall-mounted, bottles of saline solution; others have been a single stream eyewash device which requires the worker to hold and direct the unit at the eyes for flushing. Neither device will effectively flush the eyes in the case of an emergency splash of a caustic chemical. If one reads the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for hazardous chemicals which may cause injury to the eyes, the manufacturer will usually say that the worker must flush the eyes with copious amounts of water for at least 15 minutes as a first aid measure. In such an emergency, ANSI Standards recommend that the worker have a device which will provide the appropriate amount of water to both eyes simultaneously, and at the same time keep their hands free to hold their eye lids open during the flushing process.

The new eyewash units will replace single stream drench hoses or solution bottles which were previously installed. OEHS is presently looking at a swivel eyewash design which is mounted at the countertop next to a sink. Models are designed for installation either on the left or right side of the sink. However, this must be determined as per laboratory or work area. Such swivel type units will allow for the convenient weekly testing of the eyewash units.

The second funded project involves the installation of airflow monitors on fume hoods. These are permanent electronic devices which will automatically measure the flow of air through the hood. If the airflow is inadequate, the monitor will sound a local alarm. Previously, mechanical vaneometers were installed on the hoods and in many cases are still on the hoods and working. However, the electronic hood monitor is a better system in that it provides an audible sound thereby warning the worker of low airflow.

The OEHS has identified several areas at Tulane University where these devices are needed and at this time is obtaining estimates for their installation. Facilities Services will install the units in areas noted by OEHS. These projects will include the Uptown Campus, TUHSC, and TNPRC. If you have a concern involving eyewash units or fume hood monitors, or if there is a special need for one of these units in your work area, please contact Pam Fatland of OEHS at pfatlan@tulane.edu, who will be coordinating these projects.

DSR Meeting Update

During the week of January 25-28, 2011, the First Quarter Meetings of the Departmental Safety Representatives (DSRs) were held at the Uptown Campus, TNPRC and TUHSC. The subject presented was DSR Expectations. The presenter was Louis Mayer of OEHS. The next meetings will be held in April 2011 and the subject will be Emergency Preparedness. Art Kirkland, Associate Director of the TU Office of Emergency Response will be the presenter. During these quarterly sessions conducted by OEHS, messages involving health and safety are discussed.

Contributors: Kim Chapital, Pam Fatland, Mitzi Hithe, Michael Kopaigorodsky, Louis Mayer
Computer Ergonomics - What you should know about Wrist Protection

Wrist Rest Pads - According to OSHA, “Proper arrangement of the keyboard and mouse create a comfortable and productive workstation. Wrist or palm rests can also increase comfort.” The problem comes in when the keyboard users see the wrist rest pad as a place to rest the wrist at all times. The proper use is to move your hands freely above the wrist rest pad while typing (no contact), then rest with the heel or palm of your hand, not your wrist, when you are not typing. Resting the wrist or palm on the wrist rest pad while typing may inhibit motion of the wrist and could increase awkward wrist postures. It is also suggested by OSHA that you reduce bending the wrist by adjusting other workstation components (chair, desk, keyboard) so the wrist can maintain the in-line, neutral posture.

Avoid Contact Stress – OSHA guidelines state, “Contact stress can occur either internally or externally. Internal stress occurs when a tendon, nerve, or blood vessel is stretched or bent around a bone or tendon. External contact stress occurs when part of your body rubs against a component of the workstation such as the chair seat pan or edge of the desk. Nerves may be irritated or blood vessels constricted as a result.”

Your workstation may need attention IF:

• You experience contact stress to your forearms when you rest them on the leading edges of work tables, or if the nerves in the forearm are affected. (Note: Your fingers and hands may tingle and feel numb, similar to the feeling when you hit your “funny bone.”)

• You experience pain and numbness in your legs. (Note: Blood circulation may be cut off by contact with the leading edge of a chair.)

• Your wrist rest has sharp hard edges. (Note: Your forearms and wrists can be affected.)

• You use your keyboard with your wrist bent in awkward positions. (Note: Your tendons can be damaged during repetitive finger motions.)

To help solve these problems, carefully select wrist rests, chairs, and desk surfaces and take frequent rest and stretch breaks to minimize the amount of contact stress that you may experience. Adjust your workstation to maintain neutral wrist postures. For more information, contact Mitzi Hithe at 988-2866 or mhithe@tulane.edu, or see the following link from OSHA: http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html.

Safety Tips for Compressed Gas Cylinders

The following precautions should be taken when using compressed gas cylinders:

• Always label the contents of your cylinders. Not all manufacturers use the same color code.

• Use a proper cylinder cart or handtruck for transferring cylinders. Do not roll or drag cylinders.

• Tightly secure cylinders with a proper chain, strap, or cylinder stand. Ensure cylinders are capped unless in use and attached to a regulator.

• Use with adequate ventilation and appropriate personal protective equipment.

• Use the proper fittings, valves, and regulators.

• Store incompatible classes of gases separately. For example, keep flammable gases away from reactives, oxidizers, and corrosives.

• Whenever possible, purchase gases in refillable cylinders to avoid costly disposal costs.