Santa’s Story - Holiday Trip to the Gulf Coast

Ho, ho, ho! I had me an awful time dis holiday season getting down to dat Gulf Coast Louisiana area. Let me tell you my story – pull up dat rocking chair or set down on de stoop next to dat gator crossing sign and listen up…

I was leaving the North Pole with my trusty reindeer Roux-dolf leading me sleigh when dis flock of de saddest looking pelicans you ever did seen in your life stopped us. I told dem pelicans, “Hey, What’s you doing up here where it’s so cold de fish you eat sticks to de roof of your beak like those frozen fish stick you get when making groceries? Are you mad?” The lead pelican answered me, “Sorry, Santa. You see dat oil slick in dat dere Gulf of Mexico earlier dis year nearly did us in. We lost our nests, our food, our toys, every-which thing. We came to ask your help, and not just for us, no. Please bring extra goodies to all our friends on de Gulf Coast of Louisiana, especially to our pal Scott Cowen and his Tulane University folks who have worked so hard serving the community, fixing things up, and making things safe. You know, dey even took a day in de hot summer to fix up de City Park in New Orleans, not to mention de homes dey helped rebuild, and de baths dey gave us to wash off dat sticky oil so we could fly again. You see, Santa, all of us on de Gulf Coast really deserve extra goodies dis year, don’t ya tink!”

So, of course what was I to do? I had to stop, reload me sleigh with a bunch more supplies & toys, and dis put me late. Santa late – can ya believe dat? Poor Roux-dolf did his best to try to get me on time again, but I decided he just wasn’t fast enough. I would have to hurry myself down to de airport and take me one of dem speedy jets. But when I gets dere, those security folks make me go through dis body scanning machine as if I’m “The Grinch that Stole Christmas.” You can bet those guys are on my naughty list. And to top it off, dey made me pay extra for my sack since it was so heavy. But I know it’s all worth it when I see de smiles on de faces and beaks. Happy Holidays Everybody!!! Ho, Ho, Ho!

OEHS End of Year Reminders & News

- If you have not turned in your chemical inventory or laboratory safety paperwork to OEHS for 2010, please submit it to OEHS as soon as possible. Contact Pam Fatland at 988-2800 or pfatlan@tulane.edu if you have questions.
- A new online chemical inventory program is on the horizon. Details will be forthcoming in 2011. Some of you may be asked to be part of a test group to try out the new system.
- Bruce McClue, former Hazardous Waste Supervisor, has left the University to pursue a career as a pastor for his church. Until OEHS gets a new person on board, please direct your hazardous waste questions to Pam Fatland (pfatlan@tulane.edu). To schedule pickups, you may also contact Jay Folse (jfolse@tulane.edu) on the TUHSC campus, Kelly Mayer (kmayer@tulane.edu) at TNPRC, or Michael Kopaigorodsky (mkopaigo@tulane.edu) on the Uptown Campus.
- The OEHS website has a new look. Please visit our new website at http://Tulane.edu/oehs to see for yourself.
- If you have suggestions for topics for DSR meetings in 2011 or other training topics you would like to see on the OEHS website, please contact Louis Mayer at lmayer@tulane.edu. He is currently planning training sessions for next year.
- If you have the potential for being occupationally exposed to bloodborne pathogens and have not completed your required annual bloodborne pathogens safety training for 2010, please take the online bloodborne pathogens training course found at http://tulane.edu/oehs/training/bbptrainingcourse.cfm. Contact Kellie Mayer at kmayer@tulane.edu for questions.
- Remember, Tulane policy prohibits storage of equipment and furnishings in exit corridors. Equipment placed in the corridor may be confiscated or disposed at the owner’s expense. For further information on this policy, see the addendum to Tulane University’s Environmental Health & Safety Policies and Procedures Manual at http://tulane.edu/oehs/upload/PPMF ullWebA.pdf.
LABORATORY ERGONOMICS

Laboratory personnel are at risk of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD) injuries during routine laboratory procedures. What are some ergonomic risk factors and how can these cause WMSD injuries? Ergonomic risk factors (ERFs) can include excessive manual force, repeated and sustained exertions, temperature extremes, vibrations, and awkward postures resulting from inappropriately designed workstations, equipment, and improper work methods. Other factors are excessive work rates and durations, external pacing of work, shift work, imbalanced work-to-rest ratios, and restriction of worker body movement. Work-related musculoskeletal disorders can result in damage to tendons, tendon sheaths, muscles, nerves, and ligaments of the area affected.

Laboratory personnel should become aware of their lab’s ERFs and address them. Typical laboratory ERFs are repetitive pipetting, working at microscopes in awkward positions for long periods of time, operating microtomes, using cell counters, using laboratory computers, working in awkward positions in laboratory hoods/biological safety cabinets, standing for long periods of time, etc. For protective measures to eliminate or reduce ERFs, see the NIH Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS) article on Ergonomics in the Laboratory at http://dohs.orrs.od.nih.gov/labs.htm. Additional information on laboratory ergonomics safety can be found at the following websites: www.nuaire.com/experience/bio-safety-cabinets/ergonomics.htm and www.vistalab.com/ergonomics.asp.

For a Laboratory Ergonomic Self-Assessment Checklist, send your request via campus mail to OEHS- Ergo Section, Mail Code TW16, or email your request to mhithe@tulane.edu.

Update from original article posted to the SafetyWave in July 2003

Holiday Fire Statistics & Tips

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has provided the following information regarding home fires associated with Christmas trees and holiday lights from 2003-2007:

- Fire departments in the USA responded to an average of 250 home fires that began with Christmas trees during this period and which caused an annual average of 14 civilian fire deaths, 26 civilian fire injuries and $13.8 million in direct property damage.
- On average, one of every 18 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in a death.
- Electrical problems were factors in 45% of home Christmas tree fires.
- A heat source was too close to the Christmas tree in 26% of the fires.
- 23% of home Christmas tree fires involved decorative lights.
- Lit candles started 14% of home Christmas tree fires.

Please take note of the statistics when preparing your home for the holiday season. For further information, please contact OEHS or go to the NFPA website at www.nfpa.org.

The following requirements for fire safety in our homes during this holiday season have been provided by the Louisiana Office of the State Fire Marshal:

- Faulty wiring and overloaded electrical outlets are the most common causes of seasonal house fires.
- When buying a cut tree, make sure that the needles don’t fall out when you bounce it on the ground. These types of trees tend to dry out very quickly, meaning that they will also burn quickly.
- Be sure to keep your real tree watered so that it does not dry out.
- Only use safe decorations. Do not illuminate your tree with candles or lights designed specifically for outdoor use.
- Keep all holiday decorations away from open flames, fireplaces or other heating sources.

A Belated Welcome

Michael Kopaigorodsky (‘‘Michael K’’) joined the Office of Environmental Health and Safety in July 2010. He will be working on both the uptown and downtown campuses. Michael is a Registered Sanitarian (RS) and graduate of the SPHTM Environmental Health Sciences program.

Contributors: James Balsamo, Pam Fatland, Jay Folse, Mitzi Hithe, Louis Mayer, Susan Welch
Holiday Decorating at Tulane

Once again, the holiday season is upon us. Let’s review our policies and procedures for decorations so that we will continue to make this holiday season a happy and safe one.

When decorating for the holidays in your work areas at Tulane University, please keep the following University policy in mind to maintain fire safe conditions and to comply with all applicable codes as enforced by the State Fire Marshal:

1. For fire safety reasons, only use artificial, flame-retardant, non-conductive trees with the following exceptions:
   - A “cut” tree, which has been treated with effective flame-retardant materials, can only be used in building lobbies. All other locations are prohibited. Written proof of flame-retardancy must be attached to the tree and a copy of this documentation must be available to OEHS or building management upon request. These trees must be placed in water to retain maximum freshness and to discourage drying. Check the tree and water level on an ongoing basis.
   - Also permitted is an “uncut” or living tree with its roots still attached. These trees must be watered as required.

2. Trees or decorations must not obstruct or reduce the width of corridors, or exits.

3. The use of lit candles are prohibited unless the specific application (as in the case of a religious ceremony) is submitted in writing to OEHS and approved.

4. No more than three (3) Underwriter’s Laboratories (U.L.) listed miniature light sets may be used to decorate approved trees. Turn off lights when the area is unoccupied, i.e., nights, weekends, and holidays.

5. Extension cords are discouraged. However, if used for this temporary purpose, then only one cord is to be used. It must be appropriately sized and U.L. certified. It must not create a trip hazard and must not be placed under carpets or through concealed spaces, doorways, or windows subject to closure.

6. Flame-retardant, non-breakable decorations are recommended. Furnishings or decorations of a highly combustible, flammable or explosive character may not be used for any type of display.

7. Decorations must not be hung from smoke detectors, automatic sprinkler heads, or pipes, or in any way that obstructs the visibility of exits or EXIT signs. In buildings equipped with automatic sprinkler systems, no combustible decorations (or other materials) are allowed within 18 inches of the sprinkler heads.

For questions regarding this policy, contact OEHS – Downtown at 988-2447 or 988-3996, OEHS – Uptown at 865-5307 or OEHS – TNPRC – 862-6653. Have a safe and happy holiday season.

Counterfeit Electrical Products

As we approach the holiday season, the Electrical Safety Foundation International cautions Americans to be aware of counterfeit, substandard electrical products. Although North American sales of counterfeit electrical products is estimated to be as high as $400 million a year, less than a third of Americans are even aware that counterfeit extension cords, batteries, and circuit breakers exist. The Consumer Products Safety Commission has issued recalls on over a million counterfeit electrical products in recent years.

Counterfeit electrical products may seem to be identical to their counterparts but may cause shock, electrocution, fire, and even explosions. Such products are often manufactured from inferior materials and without normal safety provisions and inspections and are sold at significant price reductions compared to normal merchandise. However, there are definite steps consumers may take to guard against introducing such products into the home. These products are often purchased at deep discount warehouses, flea markets, and discount stores. Use caution, especially in online transactions. Buy only from reputable retailers and authorized manufacturers. Look for certifications from nationally-recognized testing labs, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Look for telltale signs, such as misspellings, grammatical errors and inconsistent warnings on package labels. Avoid products that lack any brand names. Reputable manufacturers are proud of their products and feature their logos and identities on the package.

Consumers may also find more help and information on the internet in dealing with electrical products. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (http://www.cpsc.gov) and Underwriters Laboratories (http://www.ul.com) both provide searchable databases with detailed listings on product recalls. For additional information from the Electrical Safety Foundation International on safety during the holidays, go to their website at http://www.holidaysafety.org.
What’s New in Ergonomic Stocking Stuffers for Home & Home Office Computer Users in 2010?
Gifts that will be appreciated year-round!

1. **Upgrade** the family computer station with an ergonomic wireless mouse and keyboard. The wireless features eliminate unwanted cord clutter while the ergonomic features help reduce hand and wrist stress. The keyboard should be positioned directly in front and close to your body to avoid overextending and reaching. It should be placed approximately at elbow height so that your shoulders are relaxed, arms resting at your sides. The mouse should be adjacent to the keyboard at the same height and to the right or left of the keyboard. The back of the wrist should be kept flat in a neutral position when using either the keyboard or the mouse.

2. **Drawing Tablets** are new and their ergonomic design is great for drafters, artists, doodlers, etc. When used, they should be kept close to the keyboard and mouse to avoid large arm movements or reaching. Use a small portion of the drawing tablet as the "active" area to allow for use of the fingers rather than the wrist in reducing arm and wrist movement.

3. **Adjustable Monitor Arms** are great for enhancing your home/home office computer stations. The monitor arm raises the monitor off the desk to provide more surface space, and it’s adjustable to accommodate all users in the home from children to adults.

4. **Laptop Stands** are simple and efficient in raising the laptop’s viewing screen to the appropriate height if an external monitor is not available. OSHA’s recommendation for the viewing screen is a height at or below eye level and approximately 20 to 40 inches from the user’s face with a 15 to 20 degree tiltback.

5. **Task Chairs** are essential for the specified task of computing! When purchasing a chair, consider who will be using the chair and the type of work the person does. Talk to the vendors for recommendations and test chairs before purchasing. Ask questions as to which chair best suits the task and/or the family’s needs. The chair should be fully adjustable. Make sure the chair has the appropriate casters for your home flooring which can be carpet, wood, vinyl, or tile. If the chair cannot be lowered so that a child can sit in a natural position, you may have to add a foot rest for some family users.

For more information and guidelines on proper placement of computer/laptop workstations, visit our website at [http://tulane.edu/oehs/ergonomics](http://tulane.edu/oehs/ergonomics).

**HAPPY & SAFE HOLIDAYS FROM THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY!**
Happy Holidays from the staff of the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. We are all very proud of the way the Tulane community has responded this past year to environmental health and safety issues. Through your efforts there has been both a reduction in injury incidents and severity of incidents. Remember, safety is everyone’s responsibility.

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