Environmental Health and Safety Audit of Santa’s Workshop at the North Pole

Recently, an environmental health and safety (EHS) audit was held at Santa’s Workshop to determine if the North Pole operations were in compliance with EHS regulations. Let’s listen in to some comments being made at the scene of the inspection:

**Auditor:** Thank you, Santa, for letting us evaluate your workshop for EHS compliance issues. Let’s start with environmental. First of all, there must be no pouring of alcohol down the drain. You are to deliver every last drop to those worthy adults on your “Nice” list. I assume I am on that list…

**Santa:** Ho, ho, ho. It is yet to be determined…

**Auditor:** Secondly, any mercury-containing bulbs must be disposed of as universal waste. You must provide proof that your holiday lights meet the criteria of being “mercury free.”

**Santa:** I assure you that the North Pole is a mercury-free facility. Why, we even insist on mercury-free thermometers to tell us how cold it is outside.

**Auditor:** Wonderful! How do you dispose of your batteries that don’t work and any electronic equipment you no longer need?

**Santa:** We recycle everything. We even make sure that the paints we use on the toys are 100% lead free!

**Auditor:** Sounds like you have your environmental issues pretty much under control. Now let’s discuss safety. Do you have a hearing conservation program in place? All those ringing bells are starting to get to me…

**Santa:** All elves who work around bells, buzzers, banging drums, or blaring horns are required to participate in a hearing conservation program and are provided with earplugs to wear under their warm earmuffs.

**Auditor:** Great! What about fall protection? How do the elves put the stars on top of all those tall trees?

**Santa:** All elves are required to take a course on ladder and lift safety. Fall restraints are used by anyone who must go on rooftops, including me.

**Auditor:** Have you done a hazard assessment for personal protective equipment (PPE) needs? For example, are gloves, goggles, and protective aprons available to all who need them?

**Santa:** Of course. My merry toy makers wear aprons and safety glasses. All who work outdoors wear warm gloves, boots, and snowsuits. I even provide PPE with my toy chemistry sets for the good little future scientists on my list.

**Auditor:** I guess there is no need to worry about shipping since you hand-deliver everything in such well-wrapped packages. Do you use placards/signs on your sleigh if there is anything hazardous on board?

**Santa:** Certainly. I have flammable placards for the alcohol you are so worried about…

**Auditor:** How is your respiratory protection program?

**Santa:** Under control. Everyone who picks up reindeer droppings has been trained, medically evaluated, and properly fit-tested to wear a respirator.

**Auditor:** Okay. There is one last thing to discuss. What about planning for emergencies?

**Santa:** We have emergency plans for everything from a sleigh mishap to possible mistletoe overexposures.

**Auditor:** You pass the audit with flying red and green colors. Congratulations!

**Santa:** Thanks. Now I’m on my way to visit my friends at Tulane University. They underwent a similar audit recently and I want to reward them for all of their hard work. Elves, is my sleigh placarded? Rudolph, is your nose glowing? Seatbelts fastened everyone? Up, up, and away!!! Ho, ho, ho!!!
Scrooge’s Corner (Bah! Humbug!): Holiday Decorating at Tulane

The holiday season is here and an important part of our celebration is the safe use of decorations. When using holiday decorations at Tulane University, please keep in mind the following policy to maintain fire safe conditions and comply with the requirements of the State Fire Marshal:

- 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 the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (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.
- Trees or decorations must not obstruct the width of corridors or exits.
- The use of lit candles is prohibited unless the specific application is submitted in writing to OEHS and approved as in the case of a religious ceremony.
- 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.
- 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. approved. It must not create a trip hazard and must not be placed through concealed spaces, ceilings, doorways, or windows subject to closure.
- Flame-retardant, non-breakable decorations are advised. Furnishings or decorations of a highly combustible, flammable or explosive character may not be used for any type of display.
- 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, decorations are not allowed within 18 inches of the sprinkler heads.

For questions regarding this policy, contact OEHS. Have a safe and happy holiday season.

Got some leftovers? Not sure if they are still good? Try these tips.

THE GAG TEST: Anything that makes you gag is spoiled (except for leftovers from what you cooked for yourself last night).

EGGS: When something starts pecking its way out of the shell, the egg is probably past its prime.

MEAT: If opening the refrigerator door causes stray animals from a three-block radius to congregate outside your house, the meat is spoiled.

CANNED GOODS: Any canned goods that have become the size or shape of a basketball should be carefully disposed.

WINE: It should not taste like salad dressing.

POTATOES: Fresh potatoes do not have roots, branches, or dense, leafy undergrowth.

GENERAL RULE OF THUMB: Most food cannot be kept longer than the average life span of a hamster. (Don’t keep a hamster in your refrigerator to gauge this.)

Seriously, food poisoning is no laughing matter and nobody wants to be sick over the holidays. Here’s a link to the Food & Drug Administration’s (FDA) Holiday Food Safety website: [http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm188807.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm188807.htm).

Santa Safety Quiz

Here is a little quiz to help keep safety in your thoughts this holiday season:

1. What should Santa wear to protect himself from chimney dust?
2. What type of clothing should Santa have for going down the chimney?
3. Santa gets some chimney dust in his eye. How should he get it out?
4. What must Santa wear at all times while operating his sleigh?
5. Santa’s elves are repairing the conveyor belt. What should they do to protect themselves?
6. Santa gets overheated delivering gifts. Should he drink hot chocolate or water to cool off?
7. What should Santa do before lifting his heavy pack?
8. If Santa thinks the sack is too heavy, what should he do?

Answers: 1) Respirator/dust mask (but he must be medically evaluated, fit-tested, and trained). 2) Fire-proof clothing. 3) Use an eyewash to flush it out with water for 15 minutes - don’t rub it out. 4) His seatbelt. 5) Use lockout/tag out procedures for the equipment. 6) Water. 7) Stretching exercises. 8) Get help from the elves.

Contributors: Pam Fatland, Mitzi Hithe, Louis Mayer, Susan Welch
What's New this year in Ergonomic Stocking Stuffers for home, work and on the go!

Need some gift ideas this holiday season? See the list below for suggestions:

- The hottest items this year are tablet computers. However, it is not enough to just purchase a tablet for a loved one. Research by the Herald Sun shows an increasing report of neck strains in new users of tablets. Many users are lowering their head to view the tablet screen for long periods of time. Accessories specific for tablets such as a tablet stand will help reduce neck strains by raising the tablet. Just like the proper placement of a laptop computer, the viewing screen should be at or just below eye level, about 18 to 24 inches from the user’s face and eyes. Other accessories to consider for tablets are an external keyboard and mouse.
- A great gift for almost everyone is the new low impact design stapler. It reduces the amount of pressure required to staple papers. Consider replacing all old staplers with low impact staplers.
- Mesh portable laptop stands are great for students and people who travel. They fold up and fit conveniently into a laptop backpack or case. When in use, the mesh stand helps reduce overheating of the batteries and raises the viewing screen to the proper level to help reduce neck and eye strain.
- The pencil grip writing aid is a thoughtful gift for family members of all ages. Placed on a pen or pencil, it provides cushioning when you write.
- Ever popular ergonomic gifts are the wireless mouse and keyboard, laptop cooling/chill pads, and laptop backpacks.
- Other possible items to consider when purchasing ergonomic gifts to improve someone’s workstation:
  - A document holder which helps to reduce neck strain,
  - A footrest to help reduce poor lower body circulation,
  - A monitor arm to help free up workspace (adjusts to all family members and helps keep data on the screen secure),
  - A fully adjustable task chair that can accommodate all family users.

For more information and guidelines on proper placement of computer/laptop/tablet etc. workstations, visit our website at http://tulane.edu/oehs/ergonomics/ergonomics2.cfm.

HAPPY & SAFE HOLIDAYS FROM THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY!