Summer in the Sun

Many summer activities take place outdoors in the sun. Not many people realize, however, that approximately 300 people die every year of varied heat related illnesses, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. The Department of Energy’s Voluntary Protection Plan has the following useful suggestions for dealing with the sun and hot weather.

Heat Exhaustion, Heat Stroke and Dehydration: Hydration is the key to keeping the body cool in hot weather. By the time you are thirsty, the body is already dehydrated, so it is best to consume fluids before you become thirsty. Because caffeine and alcohol promote dehydration by stimulating the production of urine, water is the best hydrating drink. It is best to plan on staying hydrated by drinking on a set schedule, especially when you are planning long physical activities in the hot weather and sun. A little planning ahead of time is both easy and beneficial in avoiding dehydration. It is suggested that adults drink 17-20 ounces of fluid before beginning activities and 7-10 ounces every 20 minutes during activities. This way you can avoid dehydrating before becoming thirsty.

Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap: This is a convenient phrase to remind us to SLIP on a shirt, SLOP on sunscreen, SLAP on a hat and WRAP on sunglasses for protection. Protect the skin with clothes and a broad brimmed hat, especially during the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when exposure is greatest. Apply sunscreen, SPF 15 or better, at least 30 minutes before venturing out and reapply every 2 hours and immediately after swimming or excessively sweating. Sunscreens may be applied on children over 6 months but it is advised that newborns should be kept out of the sun.

The American Cancer Society says that skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. Suntans look nice but did you know that a tan is really the result of the sun’s damage to DNA and that this damage can lead to skin cancer? Simple precautions like those recommended here can help protect the skin and minimize the chances for skin cancer. The idea is to protect all surfaces of the skin before sun damage occurs.

Much like suntans on the skin, ultraviolet (UV) rays also damage the eye. Even in the shade, our eyes can be damaged from UV rays reflected from buildings, roadways and other surfaces. That’s why it is recommended that we use eye protective sunglasses that offer 100% UV protection. Some “sunglasses” are strictly for appearances and offer little or no UV protection. These may appear to offer protection but really afford a false sense of security and no protection. In general, the color and darkness of the lenses are not good indicators of the amount of UV protection afforded. Make sure to check the sunglass specifications to make sure that you are getting UV protection.

On-campus Medical Emergencies... “Who you gonna call?”

If there is a medical emergency on the Uptown, Downtown, or TNPRC campus, the procedure is to call the Tulane Police emergency number first; Tulane Police will then call 9-1-1. This procedure was reviewed and approved by the University Emergency Preparedness Committee (which includes both police departments) and approved by the President’s Cabinet. For further information, see: http://tulane.edu/emergency/preparedness/medical-emergency.cfm. Emergency numbers for the various campuses are as follows:

- TNPRC Police emergency: 985-871-6411
- TUHSC Police emergency: 504-988-5555
- Uptown Police emergency: 504-865-5200, or pick-up the nearest emergency blue-light phone.
- Other Campuses: Call 911

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Tips for Twilight and Night Driving

Most people are aware that night driving can present special difficulties, but did you know that the National Safety Council says that the traffic death rate for night drivers is three times higher than during the day? Given that ninety percent of a driver’s reaction depends on vision, this is hardly surprising. Darkness compromises depth perception, peripheral vision, and color recognition. Nighttime fatigue and drowsiness add to the problem, causing longer reaction time and reduced concentration. Older drivers in particular have greater difficulty seeing at night. Weekends are more dangerous, with more fatalities occurring on weekend nights than any other time in the week. The main reason for this is the added problem of DUI drivers on weekends.

Fortunately there are definite things we can do to lessen the dangers of night driving. The National Safety Council recommends the following:

- Don’t drink and drive. Alcohol not only severely impairs driving ability but is also a depressant, inducing fatigue.
- When in doubt, turn your headlights on to help other drivers see you.
- Reduce your speed and increase your following distance.
- Nicotine and carbon dioxide hamper night vision. Avoid smoking.
- When oncoming traffic does not lower headlights from high beam to low beam, don’t look into the light. Avoid the glare by watching the right side of the roadway and using it as a steering guide.
- Make frequent stops on long drives, making time for light snacks and stretching. If you are too tired to drive, stop and get rest. Don’t try driving when tired. One mistake could be fatal.
- Before leaving, make sure your windows are clean and clear and that your headlights, signal lights, and taillights are clean and visible.
- Before leaving, make sure your car is mechanically sound and that your headlights are properly aimed. Misaligned headlights blind other drivers and may cause an accident.

Finally, when the sun is going down, driving is particularly difficult because your eyes are adjusting to the darkness. Be aware that conditions are changing and employ night driving techniques as soon as twilight begins. (Picture and more info on night driving can be found at [http://www.mpi.mb.ca/english/dr_tips/WFPColumn/NightDriving.html](http://www.mpi.mb.ca/english/dr_tips/WFPColumn/NightDriving.html))

Beware of Bogus Inspectors

Do you know what to do if someone from a local, state, or federal regulatory agency shows up at your campus facility? One of the first things you need to do is verify the person’s credentials. There have been two recent incidents in Texas where unidentified persons posed as radioactive materials inspectors working for the State of Texas. In both instances, the individuals approached radiography crews and attempted to conduct inspections of the crew’s operations.

All regulatory inspectors carry documentation and a picture ID. If you are unfamiliar with someone who claims to be acting for an Agency, you should ask to see their credentials. And, if the agency has anything to do with environmental health or safety, e.g., OSHA, EPA, DEQ, State Fire Marshal or local fire department, Health Department, etc., please contact OEHS right away. (Simply call our main office at 988-5486 & press 1 to speak to an attendant.)

Shop Safety

OSHA recently proposed a $130,800 fine on a woodworking shop in New York after an employee’s hand was partially amputated on an unguarded radial arm saw. An accident like this could prompt an OSHA inspection that will uncover many other violations. Many of the violations found at the woodworking shop are typical of those found in theatrical shops, art/architecture studios (and maintenance shops) at colleges and universities:

- Unguarded saw blades (these willful violations accounted for $84,000 of the fine)
- Fire hazards (excess accumulations of combustible wood dust, failure to ground and bond dust collection systems and flammable liquid containers, lack of fire extinguisher training)
- Obstructed exit routes or locked exit doors
- Lack of eye wash stations/drenching stations
- Food consumption in areas where hazardous chemicals are used
- Improperly labeled chemical containers
- Deficiencies with the respiratory protection program

The OEHS has several self-inspection checklists (in the DSR portion of our website) that can be used to evaluate work areas. A shop inspection checklist can be found at [http://www2.som.tulane.edu/oehs/safety/16F-oehss13.pdf](http://www2.som.tulane.edu/oehs/safety/16F-oehss13.pdf).
OEHS Recommendations: Ergonomic Placement of Single & Dual Monitors

1. The monitor should be raised so that the top of the viewing screen is at or below eye level and approximately 20 to 40 inches from worker’s face, with a 15 to 20 degree tilt back, unless the angle causes additional glare.

2. If the workstation is setup for two or more monitors, the primary task monitor should be positioned centered, same as above, with the other monitor positioned to the right or left at the same eye level as the primary task monitor (Figure 1). However, if both monitors are used equally, then center them directly in front with a slight outward “V” shape. It is recommended that the individual should use their eye movement to view the screens in place of moving their head and neck back and forth (Figure 2).

3. A flat panel monitor arm for single or dual monitors is a good solution to make easy height and distance adjustments to the viewing screen(s). Also it frees up work space by eliminating the base of the monitor. (Pictures of monitor arms are from Humanscale)

4. Matte finished LCD and flat screen CRT monitors are less prone to reflected glare. However, if the glare problem persists despite moving the monitor or adjusting lighting, an anti-glare filter over the viewing screen should aid in reducing serious glare problems caused by direct or indirect light sources.

5. A document holder should be placed at the same distance and height as the monitor to reduce awkward movement and posture of head and neck, or eye strain. Another possibility is to position the document holder directly beneath the monitor, if written entries are necessary. This helps reduce frequent movement of head, neck, or back.

6. Always, check with your IT Person for recommendations and set up of multi-monitor screens. With the right set up, multiple screens can work off one keyboard and mouse.

7. Also, check with your vendors for recommendations on which monitor arm to order because of the additional monitor’s weight and compatible desk top installation.

Sources for article: OSHA.gov eTools, Details-Worktools.com; KHulsey.com; Ergoweb.com; Ergoware.com; Xybix.com; Microsoft Research article by Desney Tan; Wikipedia; 3M.com.
Equipment Transfer Precautions

Chemical spills are always a hazard in the workplace and we want to do everything possible to avoid them. Besides potentially contaminating the work area and destroying experiments, spills cause unnecessary delays, they are a danger to health and safety, and they may require the evacuation of entire labs and buildings. One potential source of spills is during the movement of equipment for relocation purposes, for servicing, and for shipping or disposal.

In order to avoid these situations and for other safety reasons, lab equipment such as equipment such as refrigerators, freezer, centrifuges, ovens, incubators, biological safety cabinets, laminar flow workstations, and lasers must be properly prepared for movement. The person responsible for the equipment must decontaminate surfaces and remove chemicals, radioactive materials, biological materials, sharps, etc. If some surfaces are not able to be decontaminated or if some materials cannot be removed, adequate precautions must be taken and appropriate warnings issued to movers and receiving personnel.

Whenever anyone desires to have equipment that held hazardous materials or was potentially contaminated with hazardous materials moved, an Equipment Transfer Certification Form must be completed and sent to OEHS. This form is available (under “Forms”) on the OEHS website (http://www.som.tulane.edu/oehs/docs/equipTransCert.pdf). OEHS will then address any outstanding issues with the person and inspect the equipment. If everything is in order, a green tag will then be placed on the equipment. Facilities Services will not move such equipment without this tag. Once tagged, it is then up to the individual to see that an IT is issued for Facilities Services to move the equipment.

If disposal or transfer of hazardous materials is needed, the OEHS Hazardous Waste Supervisor (988-2865) should be consulted prior to the equipment transfer. If there is a possibility that equipment may be contaminated with radioactive materials, a radiation survey may be necessary. Also, if radiation sources need to be disposed or transferred, contact the OEHS Radiation Safety Manager (988-2867) prior to the transfer.

Transportation of hazardous materials on public roads requires a DOT (Department of Transportation) certified driver. If equipment containing hazardous materials (chemical, radioactive, biological) must be transported, especially over public roads, contact the OEHS Hazardous Waste Supervisor. In preparing for transport, verify that the equipment is properly packaged to prevent release or spillage. Appropriate shipping containers and labeling may be needed. For other questions regarding equipment transfer, please contact the OEHS.

Storm Drains vs. Sanitary Sewers – An Important Difference

Some people think that it is okay for paint brushes which were used with “green” latex paint to be cleaned over a storm drain. And food service personnel may believe that used grease can be put into storm drains. These notions are simply not true.

Storm drains operate independently from sanitary sewer systems. Wastewater from sinks and toilets is discharged to the sanitary sewer system where it is treated. On the other hand, storm drains are typically designed to drain untreated storm water (or “urban runoff”) into rivers or streams.

The separation of storm sewers from sanitary sewer helps to prevent sewage treatment plants becoming overwhelmed by the huge influx of water during a rainstorm, which can result in untreated sewage being discharged into the environment. In New Orleans, storm drains collect rainwater and discharge directly into Lake Pontchartrain via drainage canals and pumping stations. The bottom line is DON’T PUT ANYTHING DOWN THE STORM DRAIN! If you see or suspect inappropriate storm drain disposal practices on campus, please notify the OEHS immediately.