Laptop Fire Safety

Steps You Can Take To Prevent a Laptop Fire:

- A damaged or faulty battery has a high potential to start a fire. (See Figure 1) Periodically check your computer’s battery against the most current battery recall list.
- Do not leave your computer plugged in and sitting on a combustible surface, such as a couch, bed, carpet, or paper-cluttered desk. It is suggested that you unplug your laptop when not in use and place it on a desk clear of combustible materials.
- Make sure the computer power cord is not damaged; it can emit small electrical sparks that can start a fire. If damaged, unplug the power cord immediately and replace it as soon as possible!
- Do not block the laptop’s fan and air vents when using it. This can happen when a laptop is used on a bed or pillow, suffocating the laptop’s fans and air vents. Try using a chill pad/cooler specifically designed for laptops. (See Figure 2)
- Dust and lint can contribute to the laptop overheating. Periodically spray compressed air through the laptop air vents in the reverse direction to loosen the lint and dust sucked up through the fan. Avoid placing the laptop on surfaces where dirt, dust, or lint are present.
- One suggestion is to run your laptop on AC with the battery removed and only use the battery when you are on the go.
- In case of a battery or electrical fire: DO NOT USE WATER! Use either a Class ABC multipurpose (dry chemical) extinguisher or a Class BC carbon dioxide extinguisher. Class ABC extinguishers are typically located in the hallways near exits.
- Use only Underwriter’s Laboratory (UL) approved surge protectors with computer equipment. Never piggyback power cords.

Other Resources:
- [http://affordablenaptopservice.com/LaptopFire.html](http://affordablenaptopservice.com/LaptopFire.html)

Fire Prevention Week

The week of October 3-9, 2010 has been designated by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) as Fire Prevention Week. This year’s theme is “Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!” During this first week of October, displays will be set up at the Uptown Campus, TUHSC, and TNPRC, and brochures and other material will be distributed. OEHS staff members will be assigned to these locations to answer questions regarding health and safety, to distribute brochures and giveaways, and to provide training on the use of portable fire extinguishers. We will be using the BullEx units for this training; these are fire simulators which use a laser-driven fire extinguisher. As one extinguishes a mock fire with the set up, the process is timed. The person with the quickest time will receive a prize.

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Chicago Fire which occurred in 1871. This conflagration killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 persons without homes, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire burned for two days, according to the NFPA. In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first proclamation for a National Fire Prevention Day and since 1922, it has been observed during this period, according to the National Archives and Records Administration’s Library Information Center.
Why You Should Remove Your Gloves When Leaving a Lab

It is standard practice to remove all personal protective equipment and to wash your hands prior to exiting a laboratory. This prevents any possible cross-contamination of clean areas such as elevators, offices, cafeterias, etc. When you are seen wearing gloves outside of the laboratory, the perception is that you have been handling something that is potentially harmful. Furthermore, your gloves may be contaminated and you may not even know it.

The recommended method of transporting hazardous materials is to use secondary containment such as plastic containers or tubs. This allows your hands to be free from exposure to any hazardous material, eliminating your need to wear gloves. In rare situations where secondary containment cannot be used, it is recommended that one hand be kept un-gloved for opening doors, entering elevators, and pushing buttons. The other hand can then be gloved for the purpose of carrying any potentially hazardous material.

Ergonomics Services Provided by OEHS

- The Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS) provides campus-wide educational training on various safety topics such as office/computer ergonomic safety. We also offer individual or group ergonomic evaluations of work environments on an “as needed” or requested basis. An “as needed basis” is when a First Report of Injury (FROI) is received that involves a possible work-related musculoskeletal disorder (WMSD) claim, or if our department judges it to be necessary.
- If a potential ergonomic hazard is found to exist in the employee’s work environment, the department will be notified and held responsible for correcting the noted hazards.
- OEHS will submit a report to the department with attachments such as recommendations, product information, and local area vendor contact lists to assist the department in making the needed corrections. There is a time limit for correcting the items noted in the “Corrective Action” section of the report. High priority items have a 45 day corrective action period and all other items needing correction have a 60-90 day corrective action period.
- If corrections have not been made within the set time limit, OEHS will forward the evaluation to the Workers’ Compensation Program Manager, Workers’ Compensation Third Party Administrator, and Workforce Management for further actions.
- If more information is needed on this matter, please contact Mitzi Hithe at 988-2866, mhithe@tulane.edu.

Hazardous Waste Identification

Laboratories dispose of many different types of chemical (hazardous) wastes in the course of a year. Some of these are chemicals that may have never been used. Still others have been partially used and are no longer needed. Hazardous waste disposal is regulated by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and, in Louisiana, by DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality). Fines for improperly identifying, storing, and disposing of hazardous waste can easily be thousands of dollars. It is necessary to know exactly what the chemicals (hazardous wastes) are and the properties associated with them in order to properly dispose of the wastes according to the law. This is called “hazardous waste determination.” Hazardous waste determination is the process in which each generator must determine if the wastes meet certain hazardous characteristics. Hazardous waste can be characterized as flammable, corrosive, toxic, reactive, biological, radioactive, or any combination thereof. For all of these reasons, lab workers (and students) must have a good knowledge of the chemicals present in their labs. In addition to the hazardous waste determination, waste generators must also label each container with the words “Hazardous Waste” and must keep each container capped unless actively pouring.

All generators of hazardous waste are required to know what they are generating and to label that waste properly with the full name of the chemical and the associated hazards. For any questions and for additional labeling instructions, please contact Tulane’s Hazardous Waste Supervisor, Bruce McClue at 988-2865.

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Backpack Safety Tips

Orthopedic surgeons nationwide have reported an increase in children complaining of back and shoulder pain. While some doctors disagree that heavy backpacks are the source of back pain in children, everyone agrees that we should pay attention to symptoms and use good judgment in using backpacks. When a child complains of back pain, especially if it limits his activities, requires medication, or alters the sleep patterns, parents should pay special attention to the use of backpacks. Some signs that a backpack may be too heavy are:

- Struggling to put on or take off a backpack
- Tingling, numbness or red marks on the skin
- A change in posture when wearing the backpack

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons recommends that backpacks weigh no more than 15-20% of a child’s weight, with some variability allowed for body fitness and strength. In addition the following are tips given by the National Safety Council to help minimize strain in wearing a backpack:

- Use backpacks with two shoulder straps to better distribute the weight. Packs using a single strap crossing the body shift weight to one side, causing muscle strain and back pain.
- Use backpacks suitable for the child’s size. The pack should rest in the middle of the back over the strongest mid back muscles and should not extend below the lower back.
- Avoid bad posture while wearing the pack by reducing the weight and number of items carried. Carry only items necessary for that day.
- Place the heaviest items closest to the back to reduce the strain on muscles.
- Use proper lifting techniques to lift the backpack. Bend at the knees and use the legs.
- Look for ergonomic features when purchasing a backpack. Padded backs and straps reduce pressure on the skin. Hip and chest straps help stabilize the load and transfer weight to the torso. Multiple-component packs help by allowing the user to distribute the weight over the back. Side and bottom compression straps also help stabilize items and keep the weight close to the body.
- Finally, reflective materials on the pack helps make night drivers aware of the child’s presence near the road.

Campus Fire Safety Right To Know

In 2008, President George W. Bush signed into the law the Higher Education Opportunity Act. This law contained new safety requirements for universities with on-campus student housing facilities to compile and report fire safety information. These disclosures are required beginning with the Annual Fire Safety Report which is due on October 1, 2010. Such data must be sent to the U.S. Department of Education and be made available to the public. Such information is to include fire statistics, an Annual Fire Safety Report, and a fire log as it applies to the residential facilities at a university. The fire statistics will include the following data: number of fires, cause of fire, number of injuries related to the fire that resulted in treatment at a medical facility, number of deaths related to the fire, and value of property damage related to the fire. The Annual Fire Safety Report must include a description of the fire safety systems; number of fire drills; institution’s policies on portable electrical appliances, smoking, and open flames; procedures for evacuation; policies on fire safety education and training; how to report a fire; and plans for future improvements in fire safety. Also, a fire log must be developed and posted. The log must contain the nature of the fire, date the fire occurred, time of day the fire occurred, and general location of the fire.

For Tulane University, this information will be a part of the Annual Security Report and will be posted on the website of Tulane University Police Department (TUPD) by the October 1st deadline. OEHS has written the Annual Fire Safety Report and compiles the statistics from data sent to them by TUPD, TUHSC Police, Housing and Residence Life (HRL), Facilities Services, etc. An email will be distributed to the Tulane University community with information as to how to access the Annual Security and Fire Safety Reports.