

SAFETY WAVE

Low Water Pressure



Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has been having problems with water pressure in many areas of the city. We hear in the news about the difficulty fire fighters have had in putting out fires, often due to leaking water mains and no pressure at the hydrants. As you may have noticed, some of our buildings, especially multi-story, have experienced problems with low water pressure. Not only can low water pressure affect toilets, certain experiments, and processes, it also can affect the operation and efficiency of eyewashes, drench hoses, and emergency showers. If you work with chemicals in a building with low water pressure you need to be especially aware of these problems. Before beginning work and at periodic intervals throughout the day, you should check the water pressure. If water pressure is unusually low, you should report it to Facilities Services on your campus to make sure they are aware of the problem. You should limit work with hazardous chemicals until water pressure is adequate. It would also be a good idea to have an alternative waterless hand cleanser available, especially for bathrooms and for those labs that work with biological materials or bloodborne pathogens. The important thing is to be aware of the additional hazards that low water pressure present and be prepared.

Cleanout/Transfer/Disposal of Lab Equipment

Funky and noxious household refrigerators dotted the streets of New Orleans after the prolonged and extensive power outage that resulted from Katrina. Similarly, refrigerators and other lab equipment such as walk-in coolers, freezers, incubators, etc. used for research purposes here at Tulane also needed to be cleaned out regardless of whether they were disposed of, moved, or kept. And you thought those old leftovers hidden in the back of the frig were bad!

Post-Katrina, the University contracted with a remediation company to dispose of contaminated non-laboratory items. But because the content of refrigerators and other equipment used for research was unknown, laboratory personnel were deemed responsible for cleaning them out. Unfortunately, we now have several labs that have been abandoned since the principle investigator and other lab personnel are no longer working at the University. That means the department is stuck with old chemicals, funky equipment, and potentially hazardous and infectious waste with no one left to deal with it.

OEHS can arrange for an outside hazardous material contractor to evaluate the clean up project and provide a cost estimate for equipment cleanup and disposal of any hazardous or infectious waste. This work must be coordinated through OEHS so we can track waste manifests and other key information. **Please note that the lab department is responsible for payment to the contractor.** For further information, please contact OEHS Hazardous Waste Supervisor, Bruce McClue, 988-2865.

OEHS Publications of Interest

The University's "[Environmental Health and Safety Policies and Procedures](#)" manual isn't exactly light reading, but there is so much to cover, it has to be big. Hard copies of the manual were distributed in 3-ring binders to each department many years ago, but that version of the manual is out of date. Each department is urged to print out a copy of the updated manual which is now posted on the OEHS website. You are advised to keep the binder (if you have one) and replace the contents with the current manual. All research labs (especially CAP labs) should have a hard copy of the current OEHS Policies and Procedures manual.

Another OEHS publication is the [SAFETY GUIDE](#). This pamphlet is given to all new employees during environmental health and safety orientation. It contains key health and safety information that has been extracted from the "Policies and Procedures" manual. The SAFETY GUIDE is also available on the OEHS website and hard copies can be provided on a limited basis. All Tulane personnel are advised to review the SAFETY GUIDE - it's short and sweet and full of good information.

Last but certainly not least is the EMERGENCY RESPONSE GUIDE. This publication contains information on how to respond to emergencies such as chemical, radiological, or biological spills, injuries, fires, and medical emergencies. It is designed to be posted near a phone where it will be readily visible and is recommended for all labs, shops, and departmental offices. The ERG is not posted on the OEHS website, but copies are available upon request.

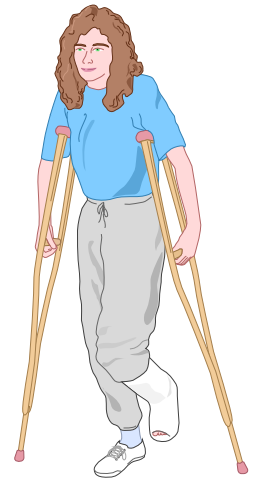
Workers' Compensation Claims Procedures Checklist

Injured Employee:

- * Notify supervisor of any work-related injury or illness. If injury is serious, call Tulane Police or Public Safety immediately. Police will call 911 if deemed necessary.
- * Complete a [First Report of Occupational Injury/Illness form](http://www.som.tulane.edu/oehs). A copy of the form can be obtained on the OEHS home page: www.som.tulane.edu/oehs.
- * Have supervisor review and sign the form.
- * Notify Workers' Compensation Specialist, (504) 988-2869.
- * If necessary, seek medical treatment at nearest clinic or hospital. Bring copy of form with you and give it to healthcare provider.
- * Keep a copy of all documentation for your personal records.

Supervisor/Office Manager/Director:

- * Verify that all information on both sides of the First Report of Occupational Injury/Illness form is correct.
- * Sign the form.
- * Fax both sides of the form within 24-48 hours to the OEHS W/C Specialist, (504) 988-2169.
- * Keep a copy of the completed form.
- * Conduct inner-departmental investigation and obtain specific details of accident/incident.
- * Consult with OEHS on investigation, findings, and corrective action.
- * Correct any health and safety issues noted from the investigation.
- * Request medical documentation from injured employee after treatment.



For more information contact Yesenia Vasquez, Worker's Compensation Specialist, (504) 988-2869, FAX # (504) 988-2196, or email workcomp@tulane.edu.

Backpack Safety

When used properly and designed with ergonomic considerations, backpacks can be a handy and useful tool. However, misuse and poor design can lead to back pain. As many as 55% of today's students are carrying loads that exceed the recommended weight, with some students' packs weighing over 40 pounds. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has developed guidelines to help avoid serious back problems. When choosing a backpack, look for padded shoulder straps, padded back, lumbar support, waist belt, multiple compartments, and the correct size. Loaded backpacks should weigh no more than 15% of the student's body weight. Distribute the weight properly. Load heavier items closest to the back. Take the backpack off when standing for long periods of time. Be sure to wear both shoulder straps and tighten the straps until snug but not tight. Use the stabilizing waist strap for added support.

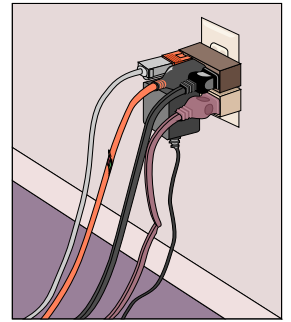
Hurricane Preparation - A Message from the Director of OEHS

It's that time of year again...Hurricane Preparation Season! There has been a renewed effort to improve our pre-storm planning throughout the University. Departments now know with certainty those things that need to be done to improve their chances of preserving their research, departmental resources and information that have accumulated for many years. Securing valuable information and research products is now priority 1 after personal safety and concerns. We all have suffered through a horrendous time, but from this comes strength and conviction that we can and will do better if such an event occurs again. Tulane and its people have been wonderful to work with during this recovery effort, and OEHS has tried to make the necessary health and safety recovery efforts as easy and painless as possible given the resources provided by the University. We thank you for your cooperation and understanding during this recovery phase and pledge to work with you every day to the best of our ability to help you get back to doing what you do best, teaching our students and performing cutting edge research. Early in the recovery planning process, I was asked by administration if I could provide inventories of the location and amounts of hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, and biological hazards in the University. Our contractors wanted to know and had a right to know what hazards existed and where so they could protect themselves while entering our buildings to carry out their work. State regulators also visited our campuses and wanted us to confirm the status of radioactive materials. We were able to provide such inventories because of the annual inventories provided by facilities, shops, and labs throughout the University. We will again be contacting you about such inventories and we know you will be forthcoming in providing us with such information. We will guard this information with the privacy protection it deserves and will use it for emergencies and regulatory compliance only.

Again, thanks for your cooperation in the recovery phase of this disaster. OEHS personnel are available to answer any questions you may have related to environmental health and safety. Remember to check the Tulane Alert Line (504) 862-8080 or 1-877-862-8080, and the emergency website <http://emergency.tulane.edu> frequently for the most current and official news.

Safety with Electrical Appliances

Electrical power is a very versatile source of energy but it can also be extremely dangerous and must be used carefully. Electrical shock occurs when a person contacts hazardous electrical equipment and the flow of current passes through the body to ground. The severity of the injury depends upon the amount of current that flows, the length of time it flows, and the part of the body affected. Small amounts of current (amperage) can cause major injury and may sometimes be fatal. Electricity kills nearly 400 people and injures thousands more each year in the United States. It can also damage property and ignite fires. The hazards associated with electricity can never be entirely eliminated, but they can be minimized through the use of adequate safety precautions and practices.



Each of the components of an electrical circuit are important: switches are used to turn power on and off; outlets or receptacles are usually mounted on a floor or wall and provide electricity through a plug and cord to electrical equipment. It is essential to have all components of the circuit in good condition, to inspect periodically, and to use safe procedures when working with them.

The following are some safety precautions and recommendations when working with electrical appliances:

- * Make sure that only trained, authorized personnel are permitted to work on electrical equipment. Such personnel are typically required to be trained in OSHA Logout/Tagout procedures.
- * Make sure that outlet and switch plates are not unusually hot. This can signal a faulty circuit.
- * Look for discoloration as an indication of dangerous heat build up at the outlet and switch plates.
- * Extension cords are not a replacement for permanent wiring. When extension cords are allowed for temporary use, make sure that they are inspected and rated for the electrical load that they will carry.
- * Never drape electrical cords over heat sources or near damp surfaces and standing water.
- * Never store flammable liquids near electrical equipment, even briefly.
- * Make sure that electrical equipment is grounded and that electrical wires are properly insulated and in good condition. Ambient conditions can cause wire insulation to eventually turn brittle and crack.
- * Avoid unplugging appliances by pulling on the cord. This creates strain on the wire and insulation and may cause damage.
- * Unplug heat producing appliances such as irons when not in use.
- * Avoid adaptors; use 3-pronged grounded receptacles for 3-pronged plugs.
- * Report damaged or defective equipment, take it out of service, and tag it to prevent others from using it.

Always report any electrical problems as soon as possible to your supervisor or to Facilities Services. Additional information and guidance on electrical safety may be obtained from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at 988-5486.

Consumer Product Recalls

Help keep your family safe by checking product recalls and safety news from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). You can view and order CPSC publications on a wide variety of consumer safety issues. A link is available on the OEHS website, www.som.tulane.edu/oehs under "[OEHS Safety Links](#)" or go directly to the CPSC website, www.cpsc.gov for information on consumer products.

Summer Heat

OSHA has issued information for the general public concerning heat-related dangers. Intensive and extended activities in the hot summer months can result in heat stress, the body's inability to dispose of excess heat. Heat induced illnesses may result whenever the body is unable to sufficiently cool itself by sweating. In such situations, heat stress or heat exhaustion and the more serious heat stroke can occur and can sometimes be fatal.

There are several factors which lead to heat stress: high temperatures and humidity, direct sunlight and limited air movement, physical exertion, poor physical condition, some medicines, and low tolerance for hot conditions. OSHA lists the following as symptoms of heat exhaustion: headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, weakness, irritability, confusion, upset stomach and vomiting. Some symptoms of heat stroke are dry, hot skin with no sweating, mental confusion, loss of consciousness, seizures or convulsions. To prevent heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, know the signs and symptoms of heat related injuries, take action to block out direct sunlight and other heat sources, use fans and air conditioning, and take periodic rest breaks. It is also important to drink plenty of water. Lightweight, light-colored, and loose fitting clothing helps to keep the body cool and minimizes direct skin contact with sunlight. Heavy meals, alcoholic beverages, and caffeine should be avoided.

If someone is affected by heat related illness, seek medical care at once. Move the person to a cool, shaded area, loosen heavy clothing, and offer the person cool drinking water while waiting for the arrival of emergency units. Fanning and misting the person with water are also advised.

Contributors: James Balsamo, Pam Fatland, Jay Folse, Mitzi Hithe, Yesenia Vasquez, Susan Welch

Feeding the Masses at Meetings, Conferences or Special Events

In an effort to avoid foodborne illnesses or possible food contamination when ordering food and beverages for meetings, conferences, or special events, you should order from food service establishments that are licensed and insured to operate in the State of Louisiana. They should comply with the State of Louisiana Sanitary Code and routinely pass their health inspections.

When ordering from a food service establishment, consider the following actions to ensure that the facility can provide safe meals:

- * Ask to see vendor's current license and insurance certificate. Ask for the date of their last health inspection.
- * Visit the vendor's establishment, meet the staff, tour the food preparation area, observe the cleanliness of the facility and hygiene of the staff.
- * Sample the food you will be ordering for the meeting.



For additional food safety information see:

- * Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health: www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=79
- * **FOODBORNE ILLNESS: WHAT CONSUMERS NEED TO KNOW:** <http://www.foodsafety.gov/%7Edms/fsefborn.html>



Protection from Sunlight

Ultraviolet radiation from the summer sun can be very damaging to the skin. The U.S. Department of Labor recommends that extra care be taken for protection against sunlight. The severity of skin damage from ultraviolet rays depends upon the strength of the sunlight, the duration of the exposure, and whether or not the skin has any protection. Excessive sunlight can result in premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. While excessive exposure to sunlight can cause skin cancer at any age, those who burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or who have freckles, fair skin, numerous or large moles, or who have blond, red, or light brown hair are especially cautioned to take measures to protect themselves.

Since, skin cancers detected early can usually be cured, it is extremely important to examine the skin at least monthly. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that changes in size, shape, or color. Skin cancers may take the appearance of pale, wax-like pearly nodules or red, scaly, sharply outlined patches or sores that won't heal. The most serious type of skin cancer, melanoma, takes the appearance of small, mole-like growths. A health care professional should be contacted whenever unusual skin changes are evident.

The following are suggestions for minimizing excessive sunlight during summer activities.

- * **Cover up:** Tightly knit clothing can be effective in blocking sunlight from contacting the skin.
- * **Sunscreen:** Those with higher SPF (Sun Protection Factor) can be effective in reducing ultraviolet exposure. Follow the directions on the container. Sunscreens need to be reapplied periodically.
- * **Wear a hat:** A wide-brimmed hat is effective in protecting the neck, ears, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- * **Sunglasses:** Even inexpensive sunglasses can be effective in blocking UVA and UVB rays. Read the attached labels for additional precautions.
- * **Limit exposure:** UV rays are most intense between 10 AM and 4 PM. Plan to limit activities between these hours in order to reduce exposures.

Additional information is available from the American Cancer Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and from the Skin Cancer Foundation.

Environmental Health & Safety

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