

SAFETY WAVE

“Stay Fire Smart”

The message from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for this year’s Fire Prevention Week, October 5-9, 2009, is to “stay fire smart.” The NFPA is stressing how to make homes fire safe and prevent burns. A home fire is reported every 45 seconds, killing nearly 2,900 people and injuring more than 13,000 annually. Roughly 180,000 people visit emergency rooms each year with burns. Here are some tips from NFPA:

- **Don’t Get Burned.** Keep hot foods and liquids away from the table and counter edges so they cannot be pulled off or knocked over. Have a 3-foot “kid-free” zone around the stove. Never hold a child in your arms while preparing hot food or drinking a hot beverage. Teach children that hot things hurt. Be careful when using items that get hot.
- **Cool a Burn.** Treat a burn immediately. Put it in cool water for 3-5 minutes, then cover the burn with a clean, dry cloth. Get medical help as needed. Remove all clothing, jewelry and metal from the burned area.
- **Water Temperature Just Right?** Set the thermostat on the water heater no higher than 120°F. Young children should never be left alone in the tub, shower, or near a sink. Test the water before placing a child or yourself in the tub. The water should feel warm, not hot. Test hot water at the tap using a cooking thermometer. Run the hot water up to two minutes before testing. Bath water should be no more than 100°F. Retest the temperature several times.
- **The Heat is On.** Keep kids away from open fires and heaters. Use a fireplace screen. Keep combustibles such as paper, bedding, or furniture at least 3 feet from heaters. Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected each year by a professional. If you use a portable space heater at home, make sure that it has a tip over switch, such that it will shut off if it tips over. Do not use with an electrical extension cord.
- **Cooking with Caution.** The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. If you must leave the room even for a short time, turn off the stove. Pay attention to what you are cooking. Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. When you cook, wear clothing with tight-fitting or short sleeves. Allow food cooked in a microwave oven to cool for a few minutes before you take it out. Open microwaved food slowly.

Home Fires Involving Cooking Equipment

A recent analysis by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) using information collected by the National Fire Incident Reporting System and the NFPA Fire Experience Survey lists the contributing factors to cooking-related home fires from 2002–2005. They are as follows:

- 38% - Cooking equipment was left unattended.
- 12% - Heat source too close to combustibles
- 10% - Unintentionally turned on or not turned off
- 8% - Abandoned or discarded material or product

Frying had the highest risk of fire. Of the 218 range top cooking material ignitions studied by the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 63% involved frying. Electric ranges have a higher risk of fire and associated losses than gas ranges. Ranges, with and without ovens, accounted for 67% of the total reported home structure fires, 85% of the related civilian deaths, and 82% of the civilian injuries. Portable cooking or warming devices had the third largest share of home cooking fires, but they also had the second largest share of associated civilian deaths.



How to Use a Fire Extinguisher: The Acronym "PASS"



One of the most important acronyms in fire safety is PASS. This word is used in the training of personnel on how to use portable fire extinguishers. It means the following: **P**ull the pin at the top of the extinguisher, **A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire, **S**queeze the handles, and **S**weep the fire from side to side. This is how all of the fire extinguishers at Tulane University operate. The portable fire extinguishers in the hallways are ABC, dry chemical fire extinguishers. These are designed to work on all of the general types of fires which may occur in our work areas. A Class A fire involves ordinary combustibles such as wood, cardboard, and plastics. A Class B fire involves flammable or combustible liquids. A Class C fire involves an energized electrical fire. There are two other classes. These are Class D and Class K. A Class D fire involves combustible metals such as sodium, magnesium, zirconium, etc. There are combustible metals located in some of our laboratories. In such locations, the laboratories must have conveniently located Class D fire extinguishers. A Class K fire involves oils and fats used in a commercial kitchen in food preparation processes such as deep fat frying. A Class K fire extinguisher is required in these areas. Class K extinguishers are not required in the small kitchenettes located in the work areas. However, an ABC fire extinguisher should be located nearby at these areas. All areas must have portable fire extinguishers.

Fire extinguishers in public areas at Tulane are inspected every month by Facilities Services personnel. In addition, each extinguisher must be inspected annually by a technician licensed by the Louisiana State Fire Marshal together with other maintenance and/or required testing. There are minimum travel distances for fire extinguishers. As an example, the travel distance for fire extinguishers installed for the protection against Class A fires must be located no farther than 75 feet away. For Class B fires, the travel distance can be 50 feet depending on the size of the fire extinguisher. Also, a fire extinguisher must be mounted on the wall no higher than 5 feet from the floor depending on the weight of the extinguisher. There are many code requirements for the installation, testing, maintenance and use of portable fire extinguishers.

Safe Use of Reusable Grocery Bags

Reusable grocery bags are a good environmental choice, but if not used properly, they can put your food at risk of cross-contamination and you and your family at risk of suffering a food borne illness. Certain foods, such as raw meat, poultry and fish, can naturally contain bacteria, viruses or parasites that can cause food borne illness. Other fresh foods, such as fresh produce, may carry bacteria and can also become contaminated as a result of cross-contamination. Here are some food safety tips from Health Canada to help lower the risk of cross-contamination:



- When you are using cloth bags, make sure to wash them frequently, especially after carrying fresh produce, meat, poultry or fish. Some reusable grocery bags may not be machine washable. If you are using this type of grocery bag, you should make sure to wash them by hand frequently with hot soapy water.
- If juices from food leak into the bag, make sure to wash the bag before reuse.
- Always put fresh or frozen raw meat, poultry, and fish in separate bags from fresh produce and other ready to eat foods.
- Put raw meat, poultry or fish in plastic bags, such as the clear bags found in the produce department. This will help prevent the juices from leaking out and contaminating your reusable grocery bag and other foods.
- Fresh produce should also be placed in plastic bags to protect them from contamination. (Ever wonder what might be growing on those conveyor belts at the checkout counter?)
- If you use your grocery bags to store or transport non-food items, thoroughly wash the bags before using them for groceries.
- After putting your groceries away, clean the areas where you placed your bags while unbagging your food, especially the kitchen counter and the kitchen table.

Source: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/_2009/2009_99-eng.php

Proper Ethidium Bromide Disposal

OEHS is continuing to get questions regarding proper disposal procedures for ethidium bromide. Here at Tulane, ALL items potentially contaminated with ethidium bromide need to be disposed as HAZARDOUS WASTE. The materials should not be neutralized or treated prior to disposal. No drain disposal or filtering should be done (this is a change in policy as of 9/09). **All solutions, gels and contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) must be disposed as hazardous waste.** Waste gels and solutions should be placed in a sturdy container that will not leak its contents, then labeled as "Hazardous Waste - Ethidium Bromide." This waste must be disposed through the University's hazardous waste program. **DO NOT USE RED BAGS** for ethidium bromide waste or supplies that are contaminated with ethidium bromide (gloves, paper towels, etc.). Contaminated sharps should be placed into sharps containers and disposed as biohazard waste. Contact Bruce McClue for more information, (504)988-2865.

H1N1 FLU FAQ's For Employees



Your best defense against H1N1 Flu is to stay informed. The Tulane Flu Task Force has developed a website to answer commonly asked questions about H1N1. For the latest information, visit the Tulane Flu Task Force site at <http://www.sph.tulane.edu/flu/>. The following is an excerpt of a few of the frequently asked questions from the site:

Will my regular seasonal flu shot protect me from H1N1? No, the vaccine formulated for the 2008-2009 flu season was not developed for H1N1 Flu. You should still get your regular seasonal flu shot. Seasonal flu shots will be offered to Tulane employees beginning in September. When a vaccine for H1N1 becomes available it is likely that will be offered to employees as well.

How can I prevent getting or spreading H1N1 flu? H1N1 flu virus, like other influenza viruses is mainly spread through coughing and sneezing, touching objects that have been contaminated with the virus, and spreading the virus by not washing your hands often and appropriately. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of H1N1 and the regular seasonal flu take the following action:

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. It is best to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. If you must use a tissue throw it away immediately and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. While alcohol-based hand cleaners help, hand washing is by far the best way to prevent the spread from person to person. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way. For example, if David coughs in his hand then opens the door to the public bathroom, the bathroom door is now contaminated. If you follow behind him and then use your hand to scratch your eye, you've potentially exposed yourself to flu virus.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu? The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to those of regular seasonal influenza in humans. They include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

What should you do if you think you have these symptoms? If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, we encourage you to call and see your doctor and follow their advice. There are also online screening tools available at wellness.tulane.edu.

How do I know I have the H1N1 Flu? Your physician will conduct special laboratory testing to determine if indeed you have H1N1 influenza. However, in the mean time, follow all the recommended actions to protect yourself and others.

Are treatments available? There are prescription medicines, called anti-viral drugs, that help keep the H1N1 virus from producing in the body. These medications are particularly helpful for persons at high risk of developing severe disease. If you are diagnosed with H1N1 flu, consult with your doctor on the appropriate treatment for you and your family.

Should I stay home from work if I have the flu? If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms you should leave work or stay home for bed rest (just like you would for seasonal flu). It is important to limit your contact with other people to prevent others from becoming ill. Limit your interactions with other people, except to seek medical care. Call your doctor immediately. Notify your supervisor as soon as possible to let him/her know you are ill and will not be reporting to work.

How long should I stay home and rest? You should remain home and avoid contact with others until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever.

Where can I get more information? More information about the H1N1 influenza can be found at:

- The Tulane Flu Task Force: <http://www.sph.tulane.edu/flu/>
- The Tulane Student Health Center Flu page: <http://tulane.edu/health/wellness/fluinfo.cfm>
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

New Traffic Laws in Louisiana

During the 2009 Legislative Session, Louisiana lawmakers addressed several key issues which directly affect the safety of Louisiana motorists. One of the most significant changes is that the Seat Belt Law has been revised requiring the driver and passengers seated in both the front and rear seats of the vehicle to buckle-up. This is a primary offense, meaning that a law enforcement officer can stop and ticket a violator for that violation alone. Another law requires that any person operating a motor vehicle on a multi-lane roadway in Louisiana must travel in the right lane and shall not drive in the left lane. If the motorist must travel in the left lane, it shall not be at a speed less than that of a vehicle traveling in the right lane. This is with the exception of vehicles preparing for a left turn at an intersection or private road or driveway, when passing another vehicle traveling in the same direction, when the right lanes are congested, or when directed otherwise by law enforcement. A third law requires a safe distance of not less than three feet between a motor vehicle and bicycle when overtaking and passing a bicycle proceeding in the same direction on the roadway. Another new law revises the current vehicle window tint laws which currently exempt those with certain medical conditions from being required to have legal window tint on their vehicles. Under the new law, applicants for the exemption must have their physician provide a sworn affidavit to law enforcement outlining the specific medical condition and the necessity for darker than legal window tint. Only certain medical conditions designated by the World Health Organization will be recognized as valid reasons for exemption. For more information on these and other new traffic laws, see the August 13, 2009 news release at www.lsp.org.

News from the Ergonomics Expo

OEHS recently hosted an Ergonomics Expo on the Uptown Campus on September 14 and 15, 2009. On display were ergonomic items such as desks, keyboards, palm supports, chairs, foot rests, lamps, and phone headsets designed to make the workplace a little more comfortable. Information was available on laboratory ergonomics, worker's compensation and injury reporting, wellness and health, and a wealth of other topics. Winners of the many ergo prizes are posted on the OEHS website. Thanks to all vendors and to all participants.

The Ergo Expo will be coming to the Health Sciences Center campus on Thursday, November 5th, 2009 from 9 AM until 4 PM at the Diboll Gallery in the Tidewater Building. Also, look for the Expo at the Primate Center coming soon (date not yet determined). Information will be provided to your DSR as it becomes available.



Welcome New OEHS Employees

OEHS would like to introduce our newest employees, Crystal Giles and Steva Pilato, to the Tulane community. Both Crystal and Steva are Environmental Health and Safety Specialists. Crystal provides expertise in such areas as air monitoring and industrial hygiene, while Steva will be assisting with building inspections, occupational safety, shop inspections, etc. Please welcome them both as part of the OEHS team.

Environmental Health & Safety

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