

### Snowblower Safety

*Jim Gindlesperger*

It's winter again in Pittsburgh, and with it comes that four-letter word that skiers love and drivers dread: snow. Many of us will be using snowblowers to clear driveways and sidewalks, a machine that saves a lot of work but produces many injuries. It is important that you know how to operate a snowblower safely, and these tips from The Toro Company may help.

- ❖ Read the operator's manual, especially at the start of each season. You may have forgotten some important safety hints
- ❖ Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts, and never remove any safety features.
- ❖ Work slowly to reduce the chance of clogging. If the chute clogs, shut the machine off and wait for all moving parts to come to a standstill. Some manufacturers even recommend disconnecting the spark plug wire. Use a stick or something similar to unclog the chute, and be prepared for the machine to jump once the obstruction has been cleared.
- ❖ Never leave a running machine unattended. Do not refuel while it is running, or if the engine is still hot. Remember that the machine parts will become hot as they operate, so watch where you place your hands.
- ❖ Make sure the area is clear of debris before removing snow. Discharge the snow away from people, buildings, or vehicles.
- ❖ Dress in layers and be sure to wear footwear that provides good traction. Avoid long scarves and outerwear with strings that could become entangled in moving parts.
- ❖ Only adults or mature teens should operate a snowblower, and even mature teens should be supervised.
- ❖ Avoid the use of alcohol and do not wear headphones. Concentration is important to the safe operation of a snowblower.

### New Year's Resolutions for Safety and the Environment – *Mark Banister*

In addition to all those resolutions about losing weight, exercising more and watching less television, how about some for making your life safer and improving the environment? Here are some suggestions:

1. Fix leaking roofs, wet basement walls and other water intrusions, to prevent mold problems. And get a dehumidifier for those humid summer months.
2. Don't use a heat gun to strip old paint—this can volatilize lead into the air where you or your family can breathe it.
3. If you are stripping paint, try some of the “green” or less hazardous paint strippers. Standard paint stripping solvents are frequently carcinogenic.
4. Gather those nasty chemicals (paints, thinners, drain openers, pesticides) you no longer use and get them ready for disposal. The Green Practices web page lists locations and events for household waste disposal <http://www.cmu.edu/greenpractices/>.
5. I know that not everyone can do this, but consider a non-power mower to cut your lawn. I have done this for two years now, and it's really not too tough on my admittedly small yard. Gas-powered mowers are major polluters.
6. Recycle plastic grocery and newspaper bags. I use them to [ahem] pick-up after my dog and recycle the extras (bags, that is) at the grocery store.
7. If redecorating, use environmentally friendly paint, to reduce emissions in your home. Ask the installers to air out new carpet at their facilities before installing it. You will fewer problems with the air contaminants produced.
8. Consider recycling old televisions or computers. Again, the Green Practice's web page will tell you where to do this at a nominal cost.
9. Check your home for electrical hazards—frayed wires, overloaded outlets and ungrounded plugs near water sources. If you have small children, put protective caps on all electrical outlets within a child's reach.
10. Get your flue cleaned yearly if you use your fireplace a lot. Occasional users should do this every two or three years.

### January is Radon Action Month

*Celia Rajkovich*

January is an opportune time to test for radon. Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. It is estimated that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year are radon-related. If you would like more information contact the EH&S Office at 8-8182.

### Winter Falls

*Jim Gindlesperger*

Did you know that more Carnegie Mellon employees and students are injured by slips, trips, and falls than by any other type of accident? Our accident statistics indicate that about 30% off all our injuries are caused by slips and falls. Some of these are serious, others are simply embarrassing, but all have the potential to cause serious injury.

The number of falls around campus typically increases during the winter months, as one would expect. Icy sidewalks and wet hallways make for difficult walking conditions. Always knock the snow off your shoes when you enter a building, and walk on the mats that have been placed there to absorb water. Walk slower and be more aware of the dangerous conditions. Don't become one of our “fall” statistics.

### Biological Waste Disposal

*Andrew Lawson*

Recently, we made some changes to our biological waste disposal policy. You are no longer required to deliver the waste to the waste holding location (i.e. MI 329). Andrew Lawson of the Department of Environmental Health and Safety now performs routine, weekly pickups every Thursday afternoon beginning at 1 PM in Mellon Institute. For all other campus locations, pickups are performed on Thursday afternoons on a by-request basis. To request a pickup, you may now use our on-line request system at [http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/Waste\\_and\\_Recycling\\_Programs/biowaste.htm](http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/Waste_and_Recycling_Programs/biowaste.htm). Alternatively, you may contact Andrew via email at [alawson@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:alawson@andrew.cmu.edu) or by calling 8-8405. If you need any biological waste supplies, you may use any of these methods to request them. If you would like training or guidance on the proper packaging techniques or the waste disposal procedure, please contact Andrew to schedule a session.

Telephone: 268-8182  
Fax 268-6976  
Web: <http://www.cmu.edu/ehs>  
Offices: FMS Bldg., 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

### New Signage

Celia Rajkovich



The Radiation Safety office has incorporated radiologically restrictive signage into the new EH&S all hazard door sign. The radiation symbol present on the door sign signifies that the area is either restricted for entry or that radiation safety training is required prior to using a radiation generating device that is located in the room. If you have questions as to whether you may enter or not please call 8-8405.

### Reporting Accidents & Unsafe Conditions

Jim Gindlesperger

Were you aware that all accidents that happen on campus are to be reported, including those that don't actually result in injury or damage? If you knew that, did you ever wonder why we place so much emphasis on accident reporting?

If so, you aren't alone. Many people have mentioned that they are reluctant to report accidents because they fear that it may be used against them in performance appraisals. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We take privacy concerns very seriously, and accident records are only shared with those with a legitimate need to know. To ease your mind, there are a number of very good reasons to report even the most minor accident. And you don't have to wait for an accident to occur. If you see something that doesn't look safe, let us know about it.

A compelling reason to report all accidents is that an injury that occurs on the job is

covered by the Workers' Compensation laws. As such, medical bills are covered and the injured person will receive partial compensation for lost pay if it becomes necessary to miss work because of the injury. However, if an injury is not reported at the time it occurs, it may be difficult to prove later that it really did happen on the job. Nobody wants to keep anyone from receiving the benefits that they deserve, but the potential for fraud on this type of a benefit requires proof that the injury really did occur on the job. The easiest way to do that is to report it when it happens.

The second reason accident reporting is so important is that the report itself becomes a major tool in our accident prevention program. It alerts us to the fact that something happened that shouldn't have. It makes us aware of problem areas. Sometimes these issues can be addressed by additional training. Other times it may require a repair or modification to an existing condition. Unless we know about it, however, we can't address it. The accident report is the best way to alert us to potential problems.

So, by reporting an accident, even a small one that produces no injuries, you are contributing to campus safety. By alerting us to a problem that we may not have known about, you may be helping to prevent a future accident, one that may have the potential to cause a serious injury to a fellow employee, a student, or even to yourself. Please help us out by reporting every accident or unsafe condition that you may be aware of.

### Reactive Chemical Safety

Jeffrey Harris



Reactive chemicals are especially serious hazards, and identifying a chemical's reactivity is not always easy.

**Peroxide Forming Chemicals** are those liable to form peroxides in storage. Peroxide formers that may be reactive or even explosive include Ethers (especially

cyclic ethers and those containing primary & secondary alcohol groups), Aldehydes, and Vinyl compounds. Here's a few of the more common chemicals to watch:

- collodion
- cumene
- cyclohexene
- dicyclopentadiene
- diethyl ether
- isopropyl ether
- sodium amide
- tetrahydrofuran
- vinyl acetate

**Shock Sensitive Chemicals** are those chemicals that decompose violently when heated or struck w/ great force. Some of the materials listed are not, of themselves, explosive, but mixtures of them with combustible materials (such as organic reagents), may be dangerous:

- ammonium nitrate
- ammonium perchlorate
- butyl tetryl
- dinitrophenol
- collodion
- hydrazine
- hydrazoic acid
- heavy metal azide
- nitroguanidine
- picric acid
- organic amine nitrates
- organic peroxides
- urea nitrate

The above lists are not complete but they indicate some of the more commonly found reactives found in laboratories. You can find more information at the University of Oxford web-site <http://physchem.ox.ac.uk/>, or from the CMU EH&S Department.

### Happy New Year!

The Environmental Health and Safety Department wishes students, faculty, and staff a safe and happy new year!