

Issue Number 38

July 2008

Troubled Co-Workers or Students

Jim Gindlesperger

Too often, when a tragic shooting or other violent event happens on a campus, we hear that someone noticed the perpetrator acting strangely but chose not to report it. Recognizing this type of behavior is too important to ignore, and reporting it must supersede any friendship you may have with the troubled individual.

By reporting troubled behavior before something happens, we may be preventing a tragic event. Waiting until something happens is too late.

What are the warning signs that we should be looking for? Behavioral changes, such as inappropriate or exaggerated emotional responses, are often warning signs. Excessive anxiety is another. Disruptive, combative behavior, particularly in someone who does not normally exhibit that kind of personality, should be looked at as a potential warning, as well.

Certainly, references to suicide or homicide should not be ignored. These are often accompanied by the giving away of personal items, indicating that the giver sees no need to keep them any longer.

Depression, lethargy, expressed feelings of hopelessness, or isolation from friends may or may not be a warning, but unless you are trained to recognize that type of behavior and what it represents, you should report it to someone more qualified to make a judgment.

Should you observe any of these traits in a co-worker or a student, it does not necessarily mean that that individual represents a threat. However, most of us are not qualified to make that determination. Report it to Counseling Services, while refraining from criticizing the individual. Express your concern and offer encouragement.

Co-workers should be referred to the LifeWorks EAP, and students should be referred to Student Health Services. By sharing the information you may be helping to prevent a tragedy.

Kids Safe Chemical Act

Jeffrey Harris

On May 20, the Kids Safe Chemical Act was introduced in Congress to protect Americans, especially children, from toxic chemicals in consumer products. The bill would ensure for the first time that chemicals used in baby bottles, children's toys, and other products are proven to be safe before they are put on the market.

Many feel the government has been lax in their efforts to protect the consumer, pointing to the recently announced presence of bisphenol A in baby bottles. Legislators say, "The Kids-Safe Chemicals Act is needed to repair the fundamentally flawed chemical regulatory structure." The bill would give new authority to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restrict the use of chemicals that fail to meet the safety standard. The new bill would also have the EPA evaluate every chemical product created for commerce, to ensure public safety before it enters the market.

Highlights of the act are:

- Chemical companies must demonstrate the safety of their products. Chemicals that lack minimum data could not be legally manufactured in or imported into the United States.
- Place the burden on industry to demonstrate safety.
- Hazardous chemicals detected in human cord blood would be immediately targeted for restrictions on their use.
- EPA must consider and is authorized to require additional testing as new science and new testing methods emerge, including for health effects at low doses or during fetal or infant development and for nanomaterials.
- Establish a national program to assess human exposure.
- Expand the Public Right to Know
- Invest in Long-Term Solutions "green chemistry."

For more information on this subject go to <http://www.cehn.org/cehn/chemicals%20&%20Vccep/kidsafechemicalbill2005.htm>.

Household Hazardous Material Recycling

Mark Banister

A common question I get from campus people addresses where they can recycle hazardous items from home. Though there were once very few options, this is rapidly changing.

Hazardous chemicals can be recycled through the state Household Hazardous waste program. The next event in Allegheny County will be September 20, 2008 at a location to be announced. To follow up on the location or to check out events in adjacent counties, go to www.depweb.state.pa.us and search for Household Hazardous Waste.

A new program this year in our area is the "Hard-to-Recycle" program which addresses things the above events do not: tires, computers and other electronic waste, and Freon appliances. There are two upcoming in our area: July 26th in the Mall at Robinson and September 20th in North Park. Both events are from 10 AM-2 PM and there is a charge for the items recycled. I took some items to the May 31st event and it went very smoothly.

Also new are programs to recycle compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). You can drop off spent bulbs at the County Health Department from 8 AM to 5PM daily in Building 5 3901 Penn Avenue in Lawrenceville. The Home Depot is also accepting CFLs for recycling at no charge.

Finally, if you cannot make the specific events, Construction Junction and Appliance Warehouse can accept (for a fee) Freon appliances. Just call them for details.

As you can see, there are now lots of options available for household recycling, to help all of us who want to do the right things for our environment.

There Is Safety in Security

John Zoll

Many regulations, standards, and laws have been crafted to address the issue of security with regard to potentially dangerous chemicals, biological agents, and radioactive materials. However, the renewed and

Lifeline Your Safety Resource

A publication of the Environmental Health & Safety Department

heightened awareness of security among government regulators gives those of us working with these materials added incentive to take another look at our security practices.

The Environmental Health and Safety Department would like to remind the users of these materials seven fundamental security tips:

- Keep laboratory and work area doors closed to discourage unauthorized persons from entering.
- Lock all work and storage areas while unattended. These areas include freezers, stock rooms, refrigerators, and other storage locations.
- Remain alert for strangers in buildings and work or storage areas. Suspicious activity or behavior should be reported to Carnegie Mellon University Police.
- Verify identity of any individual claiming to be a regulator by requesting to see their identification. All local, state, and federal regulators are required to show proof of identification.
- Know what type and amounts of chemicals, biological agents, and radioactive materials are present in your work area. Immediately report missing stocks and ancillary equipment (e.g., beakers, flasks, dewers, tubing, etc.) to EHS
- Do not open leaking, damaged, stained, or otherwise suspicious packages. Report these to the Carnegie Mellon University Police.
- Maintain minimal stocks of chemicals, biological agents, and radioactive materials.

EHS will continue to monitor safety and security of university work areas. Please contact the EHS office for additional information, guidance and/or evaluation specific to your work area.

Important Safety Tip

The single most important fire prevention measure is to equip your home with working smoke detectors. Place one on the entry level and outside each sleeping area. Remember to test them every month and replace the batteries annually.

WELCOME

Jim Gindlesperger

EH&S is pleased to have two interns working with us for the summer. Chris Zanetti and

Camille Manley, both majoring in Environmental Health and Safety Management at Slippery Rock University, have joined us as part of their training. If you see Camille or Chris, please welcome them to CMU.

West Nile Virus

Jim Gindlesperger



Our wet spring means we will likely see a bumper crop of mosquitoes this summer, with an accompanying risk of West Nile virus. It is important that you know how to protect yourself.

First, you should know that few who become infected show even minor flu-like symptoms, and only in rare cases will the infection result in severe illness. Less than 1% of those infected will develop a severe illness, and fewer still will die. Also, those who are infected are believed to develop a lifelong immunity.

The virus is not spread from human to human, although there is rising suspicion that it could spread through organ transplants. It is not spread by contact with dead birds, either, as many fear.

To avoid mosquito bites, stay indoors at dawn and dusk when mosquito activity peaks. When outside, wear long sleeved shirts and long pants, and apply an insect repellent containing at least 35% DEET. DEET works by disrupting the ability of biting insects to detect the source of carbon dioxide—the gas naturally given off by our skin and in our breath—which is what attracts mosquitoes to us. In other words, it doesn't kill the insects—it just makes it impossible for them to locate their prey.

To reduce exposure, repair broken window screens, keep doors and windows closed, and eliminate any standing water sources. Puddles, tires, or even lamp posts can contain standing water, perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Be watchful for these places and eliminate them.

By following these simple precautions, and by knowing the truth about West Nile Virus, you can protect yourself and eliminate a lot of worry.

What is Chemtracker and Why Do I Need to Use it?

Michael Fouch

Chemtracker is a software package used to maintain chemical inventories here at Carnegie Mellon University. The program was developed at Stanford University and is currently being used by several universities around the country. Access to the program can be found on the EH&S website. Once the chemical owner or user obtains a chemtracker ID and password they can have unlimited access to their chemical inventory.

The program allows chemical owners to track and manage their inventories and EH&S to identify safety and compliance needs. The chemical owner even has the option of creating three user defined fields which can store whatever information might be needed. Default fields include manufacturer, chemical name, physical state, formula, and location. The chemical owner can authorize as many users as he or she sees fit and limit what each user can see or modify.

So now you know what Chemtracker is, but why should you use it? Besides the benefits mentioned above, laboratories, research areas, and anyplace that uses or stores hazardous materials must maintain an inventory. This is both a requirement of our Chemical Hygiene Plan and Allegheny County. Having a chemical inventory promotes chemical waste minimization and reduces the chance of purchasing chemicals you might already own.

A chemical inventory helps identify chemicals that have expired or have been around too long. Chemtracker allows you to sort your inventory by the date you entered a chemical so it is easy to identify how long a chemical has been in your inventory. Chemtracker also identifies which storage group a chemical belongs in, therefore allowing you to store your chemicals in compatible groups. For these reasons each lab is checked to ensure that they have an inventory in Chemtracker as part of the annual safety audit performed by EH&S. If you have any questions about how to use Chemtracker please contact Michael Fouch by phone at 412-268-3221 or email at mfouch@andrew.cmu.edu.

To Reach Us

Telephone: 268-8182

Fax 268-7871

Web: <http://www.cmu.edu/ehs>

Offices: FMS Bldg., 3rd floor