

Unidentified Powders

Jim Gindlesperger

With the heightened awareness of terrorist activities it is understandable why people are suspicious at the first sight of an unidentified powder on campus. EH&S has been called on to investigate numerous reports of powders over the past several weeks. In every case the powder has been identified as something that is a normal part of our daily lives.

While we will continue to respond to reports of unidentified powders, there are a number of things the campus community can do to help us, and to relieve some of the anxiety that inevitably arises when such powders are discovered.

- **NEVER** place any kind of powder in an envelope, on a desk, or any other place without properly identifying it.
- If you work with powders of any kind, please make sure all containers are properly labeled and identified.
- Do not leave any unidentified powder out where someone can find it and mistake it for something more sinister than it actually is. You may know what it is, but you can't assume others will be familiar with it.
- If you spill any kind of powder, even something as innocent as coffee creamer or talcum powder, clean it up immediately. Be sure you have cleaned the area thoroughly, because even a small residue has triggered responses.
- Likewise, if the work you do produces a powder or dusty material, be sure to thoroughly clean the area when your job is finished.

Certainly we encourage students, faculty, and staff to remain vigilant and to alert University Police if anything suspicious is observed. However, if the above guidelines are followed, much unproductive activity can be avoided and anxieties can be reduced. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in these difficult times.

Synergism of Safety

Megan Marks



As with many components of life, complex, difficult tasks are most effectively completed when using talents of more than one person. This approach is commonly known as a team and requires harmonious, positive attitudes and an ever-increasing awareness by each member. Team building is often associated with increased sharing of equipment, space and materials. Interpersonal relations develop through the nurturing of mutual trust and collective pride among the team.

Personal attitude and awareness are the two most important elements of work place or laboratory safety. When an individual values safety and looks after him/herself and others, he or she is able to identify health and safety concerns that may have been missed if they were just concerned with themselves. Subsequently, the workplace safety and productivity have just not doubled but may have tripled or quadrupled. Hence, safety flourishes through synergy.

New Annual Refresher Training Requirement for Hazardous Waste Generators

Melissa Burik

Starting in January 2002, all generators of hazardous waste must have Annual Hazardous Waste Refresher Training. Environmental Health & Safety will be meeting this requirement by sending out newsletters via email. Everyone who has attended Initial Hazardous Waste Training at Carnegie Mellon will be receiving this newsletter in January. To meet federal requirements, recipients must read the newsletter, answer a few questions, and reply via email. Additional details will be forthcoming.

Laser Pointer Safety

Mark Banister

Laser pointers have recently experienced a great surge of popularity, both for their use as instructional aids and for their role in juvenile and adult pranks. Most of these devices are class 3a lasers, meaning that they are of sufficient power to be hazardous

under both direct and certain reflected viewing.

There have been many reports of at least temporary vision loss after brief, "prank-type" exposures. Verified retinal injuries have been confirmed from persons exposed to longer periods of time. The prank-type exposures are not limited to children, either. Reports (and arrests) have been made when adults have directed their pointers at athletes at sporting events and at motorists while driving. There have even been reports of beams directed at airplane pilots and bus drivers, with accidents reported because of the distraction produced.



The Laser Institute of America offers the following tips for laser pointer safety:

- Never shine a laser pointer at anyone. Laser pointers are designed to illustrate inanimate objects.
- Do not allow minors to use a pointer unsupervised. Laser pointers are not toys.
- Do not point a laser pointer at mirror-like surfaces. A reflected beam can act like a direct beam on the eye.
- Be aware of irresponsible uses of pointers so the psychological effect will be minimized if you are illuminated by one.
- Do not purchase a laser pointer if it does not have a caution or danger sticker on it identifying its class. Report suspicious devices to the FDA.

Laser pointers can be very helpful instructional aids. Responsible use of them is necessary due to their potential for harm.

Training, January – March, 2002

Jim Gindlesperger



Call Extension 8-8182 to register for any of the following training classes, or to request that a particular class be conducted. Classes will be held in the 3rd floor

conference room of the FMS Building unless otherwise indicated. Course descriptions can be found on the EH&S website.

Radiation Safety (Instructor: Megan Marks)

Call for training dates and times

Hazard Communications (Instructors: Melissa Burik, Mark Banister)

January 14, February 11, March 11:
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Laboratory Safety, Hazardous Waste (Instructors: Melissa Burik, Mark Banister)

January 10, January 28, February 25, March 25: 9:30 am – noon
Note: the January 10 class will be at the MI Social Room

Scaffold Safety (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

January 25: 7:45 – 9:00 am

Office Ergonomics (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

February 15: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Laboratory Ergonomics (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

February 20: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Driving University Vehicles (Instructor: Outside Agency, coordinated by Jim Gindlesperger)

March 8: 8:30 am – 11:30 am

OSHA Awareness/Accident Reporting (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

March 15: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Lifting/Back Safety (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

March 20: 8:30 am – 9:30 am

Congratulations to Megan Marks, EH&S's Radiation Safety Officer, who recently was awarded her Ph. D. in Pharmacology-Toxicology from Duquesne University. Megan completed the requirements just a few months after the birth of her first baby, Katherine, so this has been a great year in the Marks family. Join us in congratulating Megan on both these milestones!

Some National Safety Council Statistics

Carole Wilson



According to statistics compiled by the National Safety Council nearly 100,000 Americans died in the year 2000 of preventable injuries. Of these, 5,200 died at work, 43,000 died on our highways, and 51,500 died of preventable injuries suffered in their homes or communities.

Note that these were people who died of PREVENTABLE injuries. These people were just like you and me. They had families, spouses, children . . . people who loved them. They represent families that will never again be the same. Had proper safety precautions been taken, these people would still be alive, still spending time with their loved ones, still doing all the things we take for granted.

It is very unlikely that any of these victims thought about becoming a fatality. Nobody does, but it happens when we become complacent. Please, don't take safety for granted. You owe it to yourself . . . and your loved ones.

Why Attend Safety Training?

Jim Gindlesperger

Many of you have asked why EH&S schedules so much safety training. The obvious answer is that we believe it is the right thing to do, knowing that a properly informed worker becomes a safer worker.

Despite this explanation, many of you still haven't been convinced to attend training, so let us put it in terms that we can all relate to: \$\$\$\$. Let's ignore the fact that being informed helps you work more safely, or that much of the training is required by federal law. Let's get down to basics: What does it cost if we don't attend?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has released some interesting figures. For instance, a cosmetics manufacturer in New Jersey recently ignored forklift training, even though the law said it was required. After all, these workers had been operating forklifts for years. Following an accident, OSHA levied penalties of \$101,250 against the manufacturer for improper training.

Similarly, a Georgia company failed to follow its lockout/tagout program. Improperly trained workers bypassed a control, allowing an employee to operate a machine while people were working on it. The result was two amputated legs and a \$140,000 fine.

Improper excavation cost an Ohio company \$348,000. An Alabama company was fined \$86,500 for not teaching employees how to properly guard moving parts on a machine. A Texas firm paid \$63,000 for improper use of respirators. And here in Pennsylvania, penalties of \$248,400 were assessed against an employer after an explosion and fire seriously burned 10 workers, three of whom died. Inadequate training played a major part in all these incidents.

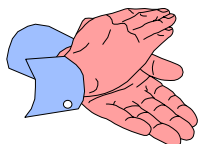
EH&S believes that training makes you a safer worker, and safety should be the driving force behind training, rather than dollars and cents. These numbers are simply offered to help you understand the importance OSHA places on training. To schedule a class or to attend a class that is already scheduled, call EH&S at 8-8182.

Safety Tip

Protect your eyes on sunny winter days. Reflection off snow can damage corneas and lenses, and lead to cataracts.

Congratulations!

Jim Gindlesperger



To Reach Us

Telephone: 268-8182

Fax: 268-6976

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

Location: 3rd floor, FMS Building