

It Can't Happen Here, Right?

Jim Gindlesperger

On January 11, 2002 the University of California at Santa Cruz experienced a devastating three-alarm fire in a research lab. Although there were no injuries, the biology research labs were total losses. The lab where the fire began performed research related to the Human Genome Project, a national effort to identify the tens of thousands of cells in human DNA. The PI noted that many of the destroyed genetic strains had taken 14 years to develop, and could take at least that long to replace.

In addition to the building that burned, three other research buildings, a library, and a parking garage were closed for several days because the fire interrupted electrical circuits. Electrical interruptions also jeopardized valuable research materials stored in freezers.

Though the fire itself was contained to two labs, smoke and water damage was extensive. The entire building was closed for more than a month, and the upper floors of the building are expected to remain closed for six to eight months.

Valuable documents, books, electronics, instruments, and one-of-a-kind equipment were also destroyed. As David S. Kliger, Dean of the Division of Natural Sciences said in a message to the campus community, "This was a major disaster and it will take a long time for us to fully resume normal operations. . . We will not be doing business as usual for some time."

UCSC had a warning: another fire in the same building in October 1999 injured a graduate student. Despite corrective action, fire struck again, and it can happen here. Too often our inspections reveal a lackadaisical approach to fire safety. As our friends at UCSC have learned, a fire in a single lab can cause far reaching problems for everyone, even those who don't work in the immediate area. Please take this unfortunate incident as a warning. If you need assistance in improving your fire safety, call EH&S. But don't wait. Tomorrow may be too late.

The Lead on Lead

Celia Rajkovich

Whether you are purchasing a home, remodeling or just doing some spring-cleaning, keep in mind that if your building was built before 1978 it is very possible that lead paint was used. Studies have shown that high lead levels may cause damage to the nervous system, brain injuries, growth retardation, loss of hearing, learning disabilities or behavioral problems. Higher levels of lead may cause reproductive problems, coma, convulsion, or even death.

Lead poisoning of children living near freeways was a major concern in the past; much of the lead came from leaded gasoline burned in cars. Leaded gasoline is now banned in the United States.



Lead paint dust and previously deposited gas vapors can also be picked up by children playing in contaminated soil around the house and tracking it inside. The use of lead solder for water pipes and lead pipes for carrying drinking water has been banned because lead can dissolve in the water over time. You will still find lead in car batteries because it does not pose major health risks, but proper disposal of batteries is an issue.

Other common places lead could be found were: plastic, printing ink, roofing materials, ceramic glazes, fishing sinkers and wine bottle foils. Users of lead for the purpose of shielding gamma or x-ray radiation on campus should always wash their hands after handling and please contact the radiation safety office for disposal of unwanted shielding material. The danger occurs when the hazardous material is a liquid, easily dissolves in water, or generates airborne particles.

Consider contacting your local health department or qualified lead inspector to ensure your home is lead free prior to removing paint and remodeling. The single most important factor in preventing lead poisoning is identifying the sources of the lead hazard.

Changes at Environmental Health and Safety

Mark Banister



Melissa Burik, our Chemical Safety Technician/Specialist, has left Carnegie Mellon University to pursue other safety opportunities. EH&S is in the process of searching for a new staff member to replace her. Until that occurs, please contact Mark Banister (8-1493) with any questions you might have gone to Melissa with.

Also, EH&S has two interns working with us for the summer, doing some of the legwork we seldom get a chance to do ourselves. Tony Paez is a recent Carnegie Mellon graduate and Eric Lanni is a Chemistry major at the University of Pittsburgh. You will likely see one or both of these young men in your area this summer, asking about safety related issues and verifying information about your work space and its safety equipment. Please give them all the help you can.

Summer Safety Tips

- Use sunscreen when outdoors
- Acclimate to heat before engaging in strenuous activities
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Take more frequent breaks
- Wear light, loose fitting, breathable clothing
- Know the symptoms of heat induced illnesses

There Is Safety in Security

Megan Marks

Safety and security have always been national concerns. Many regulations, standards, and laws address these issues with regard to potentially dangerous chemicals, biological agents, and radioactive materials. However, recent events have led to a renewed and heightened awareness of safety and security.

The Environmental Health and Safety Department would like to remind the users of these materials of 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. Convey suspicious activity or behaviors to Carnegie Mellon University Police.
- Verify identity of any individual claiming to be a regulator by requesting to see 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 convey 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(s).

To Reach Us

Telephone: 268-8182

Fax: 268-6976

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

Location: 3rd floor, FMS Building

New Look to the EH&S Web Site

Mark Banister

EH&S has recently revised its web site with a brand new look and a lot of new information. We hope that the new format is easier to work with and easier for our Carnegie Mellon community to find the information it needs.

We have added additional information in the areas of asbestos management, biological waste practices, laser use, and expanded

and information on the ever-growing recycling efforts on campus. Also, the emergency response guidebook developed for areas where chemicals are used or present is also present on the new site.

As before, we continue to provide extensive information in the areas of hazardous waste, radiation safety and hazardous chemical use.

Please take a few minutes to check out the new site, at the same address as before: www.cmu.edu/ehs. There are probably a few corrections we need to make as well—be sure and let us know if you find any!

Biological Safety Concerns

Megan Marks

The EHS Department has recently assigned Megan Marks as the Biological Safety Officer for the university. She will develop, implement, and provide support and direction to occupational and research activities involving biohazards at the university.

Biohazards are defined as infectious agents (i.e., pathogens) or materials produced by living organisms that may cause disease in living organisms. This includes human pathogens and any infectious material that may contain such pathogens (human-, non-human-, primate-, and other animal sourced materials) and other biologically active agents (i.e., allergens, arthropods, toxins, venoms, viruses, etc.) that can cause disease in animals, plants, or humans.

The program assists the university community with institutional, local, state, and federal compliance involving biohazards. The program's intent is to be a resource for information, guidelines, policies, and procedures that will enable and encourage those working at the university to work safely and reduce or eliminate the potential for exposure to biological hazards.

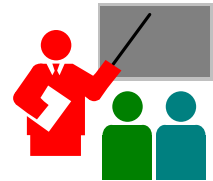
Please direct any questions or concerns regarding biological safety to Megan Marks at 268-3221 or mmarks@andrew.cmu.edu.

Training, July-September, 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)

Check website for training dates and times

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

No regularly scheduled classes until October

Hazard Communication, Laboratory Safety, Hazardous Waste (Instructors: Mark Banister) – To schedule special training for incoming students call 8-8182

July 29, August 26, September 30:
1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Lifting/Back Safety (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

July 11: 8:30 am – 9:30 am

Office Ergonomics (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

July 23: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Laboratory Ergonomics (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

August 16: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

OSHA Awareness (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

August 29: 8:00 am – 9:30 am

Accident Reporting (Instructor: Jim Gindlesperger)

September 11: 8:00 am – 9:30 am

Safety is NO

