Successful State Inspection of TTUHSC Research Labs!

Toni Denison MS, Laboratory Manager
Renee Witherspoon MS, CSP, CIH, CHMM, Occupational Manager

On February 28th, TTUHSC research labs in Lubbock were inspected by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The inspection was triggered after several recent laboratory incidents at Texas Tech University including an incident in January 2010 where a graduate student in the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry was seriously injured when the experiment he was working on exploded.

TCEQ surveyed TTUHSC labs, the chemical waste storage facility, and audited records maintained by the Environmental Safety division of Safety Services. The focus of this TCEQ inspection was on chemical waste collection and disposal and other lab safety issues were addressed. TCEQ senior environmental investigators Eric Quintela and Jason Adams walked through labs on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floor. There were a couple of deficiencies that were corrected on-site. No violations were documented in the final report; therefore, no TCEQ citations were written. Recommendations included:

- Assuring all biohazard waste containers have lids that not only properly fit but are also secured at all times when material is not being added to it.
- For hazardous waste storage areas, assuring a 36-inch clearance around the area to provide access in the event of a spill or other type of emergency.
- Assuring all chemicals are properly stored and segregated.
- Containers, specifically secondary containers, should be labeled with the hazard of the contents.
- Gas cylinders should be secured.

At the conclusion of the investigation, Mr. Quintela stated that overall we were “in good shape” and appreciated the hospitality and cooperation by all involved.

Safety Services would like to thank all the Principal Investigators (PI’s) and their staff for all their hard work in preparing for the TCEQ inspection. Congratulations on your continued success and attention to safety.
On April 3rd the Dallas-Ft. Worth area was hit by more than 17 tornadoes. It was amazing to watch 80 foot semi-trailers being thrown around like they were toys. Then on April 14th and 15th there were more twisters that tore through parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa where several people lost their lives. With severe weather season in full swing, it is now time for you and your family to make a plan and be prepared for a possible emergency situation both at work and at home. When your family is safe and secure, it is much easier for you to respond if you are needed here. Review your department’s plan for severer weather. Also, talk with your family members and involve them in the planning process to help reduce their anxiety about emergencies.

- **At HSC** – A “Code Brown” alert means immediate danger of approaching tornado or severe winds, heavy rain or hail. A “Code Brown” requires an immediate response. Whereas a “Severe Weather Watch” and a “Severe Weather Warning” require that each department determine what assistance will be needed to be prepared in the event the weather becomes more severe. See TTUHSC OP76.15 for more information.
  - Emergency Alerts will be sent to you through the Stat!Alert Emergency Notification System. To receive these alerts, make sure you are signed in to STAT!Alert. STAT!Alert messages will be sent as text, to your mobile phone, and/or home phone. For more information and/or to sign up, see www.ttuhscl.edu/emergencyAlert.

- **At Home** – Invest in a NOAA weather radio. Discuss what action will be necessary as the weather reports move from a “Watch” to a “Warning” status. Encourage your family members to plan for their own safety when at home, work, school or traveling in a vehicle during severe weather events.

- **At HSC** – Once a “Code Brown” is called, seek shelter immediately. Know your area of safety. Your Unit Safety Officer (USO) and/or supervisor have determined the location(s) of your department’s area of safety.

- **At Home** – Plan where to meet after a disaster if your home becomes unsafe. Choose two places, one just outside of your home and one outside of your neighborhood in case you are told to evacuate. If you have children at school, make sure to talk to them about what to do, and where to meet you following the emergency.

- **At HSC** – Plan for the needs of patients. It is the responsibility of each clinic to determine how patients will be sheltered or evacuated.

- **At Home** – Plan for the special needs of children, seniors or family members. If you have pets, don’t forget about them.

- **At HSC** – Consider making a disaster supply kit and/or a “Go Kit”. For more information on supply kits see: www.ready.gov.

- **At Home** – Know where to find your disaster supply kit and/or “Go Kit”. If you don’t have a kit, make one.

For more information on getting prepared and supply kits see: http://www.ready.gov/. If you would like to become involved in emergency response activities in our community, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) needs you. Contact Rosalyn Martinez at the South Plains Association of Governments, rmartinez@spag.org, for more information.

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**Deadline Fast Approaching for Safety Training Compliance!**

**Maria Garza M.Ed., Education & Training Manager**

Are your safety training requirements complete? Check your status today at www.ttuhscl.edu/admin/safety/training. Work with your USO to make sure your department is 100% compliant before the end of the fiscal year in August. You have 3 more months to reach that 100% goal!

Look for email reminders from your USO coming soon.

**The August Deadline Will Be Here Before You Know It!**

**COMPLETE YOUR SAFETY TRAINING TODAY!**

**WWW.TTUHSC.EDU/ADMIN/SAFETY/TRAINING**

**GIT-R-DONE!**
Criminal Charges Filed in Academic Lab Accident

Toni Denison MS, Laboratory Manager

Safety Services recently hosted a webinar entitled, “Lab Accidents in the News: Institutional and Individual Risks, Roles, and Responsibilities.” One of the accidents that was discussed was the death of a young UCLA employee. I want to summarize that incident here, for those of you who may not have heard about it.

On December 29th, 2008, 23 year old research assistant Sheri Sangji was severely burned in a lab fire in her UCLA biochemistry lab. She was working with t-butyl lithium, a substance that spontaneously ignites when exposed to the atmosphere. The syringe that she was using came apart in her hands, spewing the chemical onto her body. She was not wearing a lab coat, and moreover, was wearing a flammable synthetic sweater which easily caught fire and burned. She suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns over 40% of her body, and died 18 days later from her injuries. Many believe that if she had been wearing a lab coat, she might have survived the incident.

Subsequently, the California State OSHA office has investigated the accident, and in January of this year the Los Angeles County District Attorney filed charges against the Principal Investigator who employed Ms. Sangji, Dr. Patrick Harran, and the university’s board of regents. Each are charged with three counts of willfully violating OSHA standards. This marks the first time that an academic lab accident has resulted in criminal charges. Dr. Harran’s bail was set at $20,000.

Everyone involved in research at TTUHSC - from the President, to the P.I.s, to the undergraduate volunteers - all play a role in the culture of safety in our labs. Do not let yourself get complacent in your work environment. Remember that good science is safe science, and something as low-tech as a lab coat could save your life.

OSH Updates Hazard Communication Standard
Will that Affect Me?

Renee Witherspoon, Occupational Manager

On March 20th OSHA announced its final rule updating the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to align with the United Nations’ Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, also known as GHS. This update is a significant change to the standard and will require everyone working with hazardous chemicals to complete additional training in labels and Safety Data Sheets (previously known as Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)) by December 1, 2013.

What’s New?
There are 3 significant changes.
1. Hazard Classification—definitions for hazards have been changed. Look for more specific criteria of health and physical hazards too.
2. Labels—chemical manufacturers and importers will be required to provide labels that include harmonized signal words, pictograms, and hazard statements for each hazard class and category. Look for required precautionary statements too.
3. SDSs—Safety Data Sheets (SDS) will replace MSDS. SDS’s will have a 16-section format.

Why Change?
Learning a new system of pictograms, signal words, hazard statements for each label and SDS will be a challenge, but will not be without its benefits. I hope that our efforts will result in an increased awareness in chemical safety for all of those handling hazardous chemicals, and since this update to the standard has a global impact, a more uniform method of communicating those hazards to our international students.
WILL THIS AFFECT ME?

I anticipate that once we complete the review and analysis of these new changes, we will develop and rollout an updated training program to our employees that includes the new labels, pictograms (see picture on the right) and SDS language, and like the standard, we will “harmonize” any documents, such as the Chemical Hygiene Plans, Emergency Response and our DOT Shipping Program with the new information.

Where’s Rick?

Renee Witherspoon MS, CSP, CIH, CHMM, Occupational Manager

Safety Services is currently without our Programmer/Analyst, Rick Rodriguez, while he attends the US Army Signal Basic Officer Leadership Course at Ft. Gordon in Augusta, GA.

Rick is the new 2nd Lieutenant in charge of a tactical installation and networking platoon in an Expeditionary Signal battalion. He is attending this training course on aspects of military leadership, training management, equipment and field operations so that he can successfully lead and command his platoon in communication and automation support missions. Upon completion of his course, he will graduate and return to his unit as a deployable, branch qualified officer.

We are proud to have Rick a part of the Safety Services team and thank him for his service to our great nation.

Welcome Aboard Newest Safety Staff!

**Timothy Taylor** is the new Unit Manager for Safety Services - Amarillo. Tim holds an A.S. in Biology from Amarillo College and a B.S. in Biology from West Texas A&M University. Tim brings a wide range of experience to the position, including hazardous waste, laboratory work, construction, and sales and marketing experience. We welcome and look forward to working with Tim.

**Heath Bratcher** has assumed the Senior Safety Officer laboratory position in Lubbock. Among other duties, Heath will be responsible for performing chemical inventories of the labs, and maintaining our chemical inventory database. Heath comes to the HSC from Cardinal Health Nuclear Pharmacy where he worked with nuclear accelerator equipment and nuclear drugs.

**Priscilla M. Suarez** is new to the Department of Safety Services – El Paso Campus. She started on March as a Sr. Business Assistant. Priscilla is new to the El Paso areas as she comes from Georgia. She is currently enrolled at El Paso Community College where she is pursuing a Social Worker Degree.

This newsletter was written, designed, and produced by Safety Services Lubbock. For more on information contained within this publication, or to suggest content, please contact: maria.garza@ttuhsc.edu or call 806-743-2597