Just What is a Radiation Safety Specialist?

When I tell friends, relatives and people I hardly know that I work as a “Radiation Safety Specialist” at the HSC, I usually get a puzzled or blank look. I’m sure this is common among other Radiation Safety Specialists/Officers and Health Physicists everywhere. Just what does a Radiation Safety Specialist do? Why do we need such a person here at the Health Sciences Center?

These are questions that some of you may have asked yourselves before (if not, you’re probably too busy to be curious). I hope to enlighten you and speak truths about the Radiation Safety Program and why we have one here at the HSC.

A Radiation Safety Specialist is someone who assists those working with radiation in keeping within state and federal laws. That’s it! Why do we need people to do this? There are many laws related to using radiation and the Principal Investigators (PIs) and their assistants and technicians do not have time to keep up with EVERYTHING. The Health Sciences Center currently has 48 PIs in Lubbock and 12 PIs in Amarillo that use radioactive materials in their labs. There are also several clinics that contain different types of X-Ray machines in Lubbock, El Paso, Odessa, and Amarillo. Since radiation is rigorously regulated, we will help the aforementioned individuals stay in compliance with the law.

This requires Radiation Safety to train laboratory personnel so that they know the law, keep track of what comes in and what goes out of the HSC, get rid of radioactive waste generated by lab research, monitor individual’s exposures to radiation so that we can make sure they’re working safely. Of course, we do get to go up stairs and inspect all of the radiation labs every month to make sure everyone is in compliance. Fortunately, the labs and clinics that reside in the HSC know the laws and are willing to do what we ask. You may ask yourself now, why does the PI want to cooperate with Radiation Safety when it seems like it’s just more rules?

(Continued on page 3)
Severe Weather Safety

There is no such thing as guaranteed safety inside a tornado. Most tornadoes are actually much weaker and can be survived using these safety ideas...

- **Prevention and practice before the storm:** At home, have a family tornado plan in place, based on the kind of dwelling you live in and the safety tips below. Know where you can take shelter in a matter of seconds, and practice a family tornado drill at least once a year. Have a pre-determined place to meet after a disaster. Turn on local TV, radio or NOAA Weather Radio and stay alert for warnings.

- **Know the signs of a tornado:** Weather forecasting science is not perfect and some tornadoes do occur without a tornado warning. There is no substitute for staying alert to the sky.

**WHAT TO DO...**

- **In a house with a basement:** Avoid windows. Get in the basement and under some kind of sturdy protection (heavy table or work bench), or cover yourself with a mattress or sleeping bag. Know where very heavy objects rest on the floor above (pianos, refrigerators, waterbeds, etc.) and do not go under them.

- **In a house with no basement, a dorm, or an apartment:** Avoid windows. Go to the lowest floor, small center room (like a bathroom or closet), under a stairwell, or in an interior hallway with no windows. Crouch as low as possible to the floor, facing down; and cover your head with your hands. A bath tub may offer a shell of partial protection. Even in an interior room, you should cover yourself with some sort of thick padding.

- **In an office building, hospital, nursing home or skyscraper:** Go directly to an enclosed, windowless area in the center of the building – away from glass. Then, crouch down and cover your head. Interior stairwells are usually good places to take shelter.

- **In a mobile home:** Get out! Even if your home is tied down, you are probably safer outside, even if the only alternative is to seek shelter out in the open. Most tornadoes can destroy even tied-down mobile homes; and it is best not to play the low odds that yours will make it.

- **In a car or truck:** Vehicles are extremely dangerous in a tornado. If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive out of its path by moving at right angles to the tornado. Otherwise, park the car as quickly and safely as possible – out of the traffic lanes. Get out and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If in the open country, run to low ground away from any cars. Lie flat and face-down, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Avoid seeking shelter under bridges.

- **In the open outdoors:** If possible, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If not, lie flat and face-down on low ground, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Get as far away from trees and cars as you can; they may be blown onto you in a tornado.

- **In a church, store, or theater:** Do not panic. If possible, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If not, lie flat and face-down on low ground, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Get as far away from trees and cars as you can; they may be blown onto you in a tornado.

- **In a car or truck:** Vehicles are extremely dangerous in a tornado. If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive out of its path by moving at right angles to the tornado. Otherwise, park the car as quickly and safely as possible – out of the traffic lanes. Get out and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If in the open country, run to low ground away from any cars. Lie flat and face-down, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Avoid seeking shelter under bridges.

**NOAA**

**Caught in the Safety Act**

Every year, usually in November, Pat invites Safety Services to a departmental “catch together” at Thompson Hall. The event is catered with menus such as barbecue brisket with all the fixin’s and breakfast burritos. Pat’s goal is learning, socializing, and having a great time as employees receive their annual safety training requirement.

We would like to applaud Pat for her contributions to the overall safety program at TTUHSC. Without Unit Safety Officers like her we would not be able to provide the necessary safety education and training that fosters a safe workplace environment for all TTUHSC faculty, staff, and students.

Have you “Caught someone in the Safety Act”? We would like to recognize those people! Please email us a description of what, when, where, and how to:

karen.humphreys@ttuhsc.edu

Scott Luker
Safety Education and Training
LUBBOCK HSC Emergency Codes

During this time of upcoming severe weather, we need to be reminded of our code system.

Codes will be announced over the public address system. You need to know what the codes are:
- **RED**—Fire Emergency—evacuate away from area of fire to designated reassembly area.
- **BROWN**—Severe Weather Emergency—go to your designated shelter/refuge area.
- **YELLOW**—External Disaster—UMC ER expects to receive numerous patients. Assigned personnel respond.
- **GREEN**—Internal Disaster—If in your area, evacuate to designated reassembly area. If not in your area, return to your work area and wait for additional instructions.
- **BLACK**—Bomb Threat—an explosive device has been located in the building. Evacuate to designated reassembly area.
- **WHITE**—Building evacuation—evacuate immediately to designated reassembly area.

**Blue**—Cardio-Respiratory Arrest—involved medical personnel respond immediately.

**Pink**—Infant/Child Abduction—Clear the corridors and report suspicious persons/activity to TTU Police.

Safety Services has a code card available that contains all the codes and what they signify. If you would like one to attach to your HSC ID card, please stop by Safety Services in BA120.

Karen J. Humphreys
Safety Education and Training

Radiation Safety

(Continued from page 1)

The Health Sciences Center has to have an institutional license issued by the state to have radioactive materials. The PIs that work with radiation indicate that they are willing to comply with state law and want to work under the license given to the HSC. If one or more of the PIs consistently do not comply, the state has the right to take the license away. That hurts the course of research and therefore PIs leave to go to other schools and the HSC loses unnecessary amounts of money.

Therefore, the Radiation Safety Division of Safety Services plays a very important role at HSC. We keep this institution afloat! WHOA, I wouldn’t go that far, but we do serve those PIs so that they can comfortably use radiation to continue their research here at the HSC. So, the next time you ask me or one of my colleagues what we do and we answer, “Radiation Safety,” you will know all about what we do, or at least some of it. If you want to know more or have concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Jason Bland
Radiation Safety

Proper Laboratory Attire

Springtime is here and warmer weather is around the corner, it’s time to get out the shorts and sandals. This is also the time to remember that while it might be okay to wear shorts and sandals to work, they are not proper in the lab. I suggest keeping a pair of close-toed shoes at work to change into and a pair of scrub bottoms to put on over your shorts before entering the laboratory area. While these are suggestions, close-toed shoes and pants must be worn at all times when you are in the lab.

Lab coats, gloves and hair restraints (if applicable) must be worn while conducting experiments and/or handling chemicals or samples.

**Q & A**

What do the yellow stickers on the side of the chemical fume hoods mean?

The yellow sticker indicates air face velocity in feet per minute (fpm), the initials of the inspector and the date the fume hood was last inspected. According to ANSI standard 29.5-2003 the face velocity should read between 80 – 120 fpm. If your fume hood is outside of this range it can compromise the safety of the worker and possibly the integrity of the work produced.

—Karen J. Humphreys
Safety Education and Training

(Continued on Page 4)
The Safety Reporter is dedicated to promoting safety awareness by sharing ideas and goals leading to the prevention of accidents and the preservation of health. Comments: victor.means@ttuhsc.edu.

Recall Registry

- Microsoft has recalled the power cords for 14.1 million of the nearly 20 million Xbox game systems ever made. The company announced the worldwide recall on February 17, after receiving reports of minor burn injuries, smoke damage, and singed carpets and entertainment centers. To see if your Xbox is in the recall, go to http://www.xbox.com.

- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announces the recall of Whirlpool® and Kenmore® brand dishwashers. An electrical defect within the dishwashers’ wash motor wiring poses a risk of the motor overheating and possibly catching fire. To check on this recall, call Whirlpool Corporation toll free at (866) 769-7260.

Lab Attire........

(continued from page 3)

What should I do if I find out I am pregnant? Please contact the Lab Safety division of Safety Services immediately and we will provide you with the necessary information.

The lab that I work in has a cart that we store food and drinks on outside of the lab during work hours and at the end of the day it is put inside of the lab for storage. Is it okay to keep food or drinks on it when it is pushed back into the lab at the end of the day?

No. It is never okay to have food or drink or even empty drinking cups in the lab. Chemicals or their vapors that are used throughout the day may become airborne. Throughout the day some of these chemicals will settle out of the air, but not all of them. Once the lab becomes inactive during the evening hours the rest of the airborne particles should settle. If you have an apple or a coffee mug sitting in the lab on the cart, these particles can settle onto your food or cup and the next day you may unknowingly consuming these chemicals.

How often should biological safety cabinets (BSC) be certified?

BSC should be certified annually for proper operation. This helps to ensure the safety of the worker and keep contamination at a minimum inside the BSC.

Is it okay to use any kind of container for sharps disposal as long as you write sharps disposal container on it? No, this is an unsafe practice. Containers specifically designed for sharps disposal should be used. These containers are designed to keep the needles from spilling out if it’s dropped. They can be found in almost all laboratory supply catalogs (i.e. Fisher, VWR, etc.).

Meet Team Safety!

Meet Cindy Jones!

Cindy, our Senior Business Assistant, is the person one will talk to when they call in to Safety. Her friendly hello and helpful attitude always comes through when you talk to her on the phone.

Cindy graduated from and lives in Shallowater after attending Richland College in Dallas. Cindy came to us from Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences on the TTU campus in April 2003. Before that, she had a telecommunication background working for GTE for 14 years and Southwestern Bell for 2 years.

Cindy is kept busy by her husband and 2 daughters, ages 23 and 16. Her hobbies include needlepoint, baking, attending her daughter’s cross country meets, track meets, and basketball games.

Cindy has been an asset to Safety Services. We are lucky to have her!

Meet Team Safety!

Meet Cindy Jones!

Cindy, our Senior Business Assistant, is the person one will talk to when they call in to Safety. Her friendly hello and helpful attitude always comes through when you talk to her on the phone.

Cindy graduated from and lives in Shallowater after attending Richland College in Dallas. Cindy came to us from Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences on the TTU campus in April 2003. Before that, she had a telecommunication background working for GTE for 14 years and Southwestern Bell for 2 years.

Cindy is kept busy by her husband and 2 daughters, ages 23 and 16. Her hobbies include needlepoint, baking, attending her daughter’s cross country meets, track meets, and basketball games.

Cindy has been an asset to Safety Services. We are lucky to have her!

Look for our next issue where we will be spotlighting another member of our Safety Services team. Remember, we are here to assist you with your safety needs or just if you want to say hello!

Meet Team Safety!