

# Department of Occupational and Environmental Safety NEWSLETTER

May-June 1996

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

VOL. 5 NO.4



## Fire in the BRB

Another fire erupted on campus last month, this time in the BRB. Like the fires last year in Olin and Millis, it is suspected that an unattended experiment contributed to the cause. While the Department of Occupational and Environmental Safety realizes that often this is an unavoidable aspect of lab work, we would like to discourage the practice of running unattended or overnight experiments. If you must leave an experiment unattended, please take the following precautions:

- Plan for possible interruptions in utility services such as electricity or water. Make sure that possible hazards stemming from your experiment can be avoided if these or other important utilities should shut down. This is especially important if you depend on a water-cooling device for your experiment; problems arising from this unexpected dilemma are quite frequent.

- Arrange for periodic checking of the experiment. If you are running an experiment overnight, we would like all labs to let us know so Security can check on it during their rounds of the buildings. Leave the laboratory lights on, and post an appropriate sign on the door.

- Check all of your equipment that cycles on and off throughout the day and night—incubators, constant-temperature baths, an electrophoresis—for electrical or other hazards. You know better than we do which equipment may cause problems. If a piece of equipment needs fixing or

*(continued on p.6)*

## New Location for Training Sessions

Beginning in June the OSHA Laboratory Standard and Initial Bloodborne Pathogen training sessions will be held in the new DOES office conference room, located on the first floor of the Service Building, instead of in Adelbert Hall.

These training sessions will still be held every Monday at the same times. The Right-to-Know training session will remain in Adelbert Hall at its usual time. However, it will be held in Room 2 instead of Room 1.

New Radiation training and Radiation retraining will also be held in the new conference room.

Please call our office (x2906--Radiation Safety or x2907--Chemical Safety) if you have any questions or to sign up for one of the sessions.

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# ***What WASTE!***

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**Chemical (x290)**

## Is There a Bomb in Your Lab?

Bombs capable of inflicting countless injuries and millions of dollars of property damage are present in many hospitals, research facilities, laboratory classrooms and industrial settings. These bombs are not the variety used by terrorist groups but are the potential explosives produced by educators, scientists, students and other professionals when they store flammable liquids and gases in domestic refrigerator and freezers.

Just like you should not store food in refrigerators that also contain chemicals, nor should you store chemicals in refrigerators designed to hold food. Storing acetone, acrylonitrile, cyclopentane, methanol  
and



Our technicians have noticed several instances of food, drink, or cosmetics in lab areas during recent walk-throughs. We want to emphasize that this is not allowable under any circumstances. This includes evidence of eating or drinking (candy wrappers or styrofoam coffee cups in trash) and the application of hand lotion.

The “lab area” in which eating and drinking is not allowed should be self-explanatory in most cases. For those in the BRB, this includes the area beginning with set of double doors leading to the lounge.

Both the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have formulated strict safety guidelines, and the Radiation Safety Manual and the Chemical Safety Manual define the university’s safety policies and procedures. Both documents prohibit eating, drinking and applying cosmetics in laboratories.

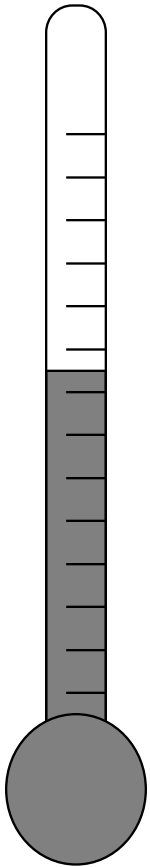
Accidental ingestion of a harmful substance occurs most readily when food or drink is on hand, and contamination of food can occur without your knowledge. It is vital that you keep these sorts of items out of the lab area. Thank you for your cooperation.

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# Non-Mercury Thermometers

Various companies, including Fisher and VWR Scientific, have created a non-mercury “environment friendly” thermometer.

The thermometers vary in temperature range, scale (Fahrenheit or Celsius), length, and price. Though they are slightly less accurate than mercury thermometers, they are also much cheaper—about one fourth the cost. The liquid is usually composed of mineral spirits and another non-toxic chemical de-



# Every Accident Has Its Cause

A chemical splashes into an eye; static electricity builds up, sparking an explosion; a beaker drops to the floor, spilling its contents. Accidents can happen in any laboratory, sometimes with disastrous consequences. But every accident has a cause, and most accidents can be prevented if you know how to recognize a potential accident and take steps to prevent it. Be on the lookout for these “accidents waiting to happen”:

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- no eye protection or the wrong type of eye protection for the job
- no face protection or the use of a half-face shield when a full-face shield is needed
- no gloves, improper gloves, or gloves that have pinholes or have been contaminated by previous use.
- clothing that is not resistant to fire or corrosive material or is inadequate for the risk such as a lab apron when coveralls are indicated

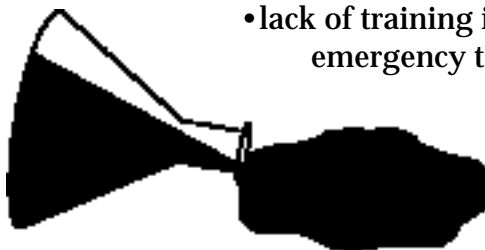
## FIRE HAZARDS

- frayed or damaged electrical cords

- pipetting by mouth
- unsecured compressed-gas cylinders
- incompatible chemicals stored together

## LACK OF INFORMATION

- ignoring information on Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) or warning labels
- not knowing what to do in an emergency
- not knowing the signs and symptoms of over-exposure and what to do if overexposed
- failure to inform co-workers of plans to carry out hazardous procedures
- lack of training in first aid, CPR, and other emergency techniques



## EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS

- ventilation problems such as hoods that are in poor condition or are being used improperly
- leaky glove boxes



## Fire in the BRB

*(continued from p.1)*

if you want someone to check it for you, please contact us BEFORE you use it again.

- Never override the safety devices on equipment or make homemade electrical connections.
- Make sure the area has proper ventilation, using a fume hood if necessary.
- Depending on the hazard, consider using water flow sensors, quick blow fuses, or a small suppression device. This is especially true when using highly flammable or explosive chemicals.

Again, while we know that running attended experiments are an inevitable part of lab work,

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