



# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Environmental Health and Safety

# GUARDIAN

Volume 7 Issue 4

Fourth Quarter 2001

Also in this issue...

Workers' Comp. Procedures	2
Training Corner	2
Mercury	3
Evacuation Guide	4
Decoration Reminder	4

*GUARDIAN*, is published quarterly by The Florida State University- Department of Environmental Health and Safety, 1012 Parking Garage Tallahassee, FL 32306-4109 (850) 644-6895 Fax (850) 644-8842

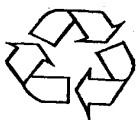
Director  
Fran Harley  
fharley@admin.fsu.edu

Editor  
David Plichta  
dplichta@admin.fsu.edu

Contributors:  
Bob Durham  
Lori Hales  
Tom Jacobson

*GUARDIAN* is available on the internet at [www.safety.fsu.edu/guardian.html](http://www.safety.fsu.edu/guardian.html)

*GUARDIAN* is printed on recycled paper. Please recycle this newsletter when finished.



# Take Care with Candles

By Fran Harley

As a youngster I was always curious about the animals around our small farm. One late afternoon after school I heard the unmistakable sound of newborn kittens in the enclosed space that housed our gas heater. Since there was no overhead electric light in the space, it was a challenge to see what might be there. I decided to light a candle and peer in. The joy of seeing the tiny kittens quickly turned to panic when I smelled the most awful smoke I have ever experienced. My long hair had caught fire from my carefree candle.

Fortunately, I was able to extinguish my flaming hair and suffered only embarrassment. Others have not been as lucky.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that home fires caused by candles have significantly increased in the last 20 years. December is the peak month for candle fires. The number of candle fires that occur in the month of December is almost twice that of other months. With a significant number of candle fires occurring in dormitories, fraternities and sororities, college-aged people have twice the risk of death from candle fires than from all other residential fires.

Here at FSU, three candle fires have occurred in fraternities and one in a dormitory within the last ten years resulting in minor injuries and significant fire damage.

Some safety tips when using candles include:



- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or before going to sleep. According to the NFPA, 37% of home candle fires occurred because candles were left unattended, were abandoned, or were inadequately controlled. 44% of the residential candle fires started in the bedroom.
- Keep lit candles away from clothing, curtains, decorations and other combustibles. Combustible material was left too close to candles in 19% of the home candle fire cases investigated.
- Use candleholders that are sturdy and tip-proof.
- Avoid purchasing candles embedded with flammable decorations.
- During power outages, use flashlights, not candles. According to fire department and news reports, power had been shut off in 24% of the residential candle fire cases that resulted in fatalities.

As we close this school semester and during the holiday season, remember these precautions because it has been proven that careless candles can kill.

---

---

# Workers' Comp Procedures

## What Do I Do When An Employee Is Injured?

Of course there are procedures to follow, but the most important is to provide medical treatment, if needed, through the University's Managed Care Company, Protegrity (formerly Humana). If the injury is a medical emergency, transport the injured employee to the nearest medical facility or call 911 for emergency assistance.



All Worker's compensation forms and documentation relating to the work injury must be forwarded to the W/C Coordinator.

Here's what to do:

- Notify your supervisor immediately.
- If medical treatment is required, it will be necessary to obtain medical authorization prior to treatment through the employer's medical managed care company, Protegrity Services, Inc.
- The employee and/or supervisor must then contact the FSU Workers' Compensation Coordinator of the Department of Environmental Health & Safety at (850) 644-7684 to assist in selecting an authorized medical provider.
- The supervisor may call Protegrity directly if the W/C Coordinator is unable to assist. Protegrity may be reached at **(800) 424-6689**, 24 hours a day. If calling directly, you must report the injury to the W/C Coordinator as soon as possible.
- Forms Required. The supervisor must complete the following forms:
  1. First Report of Injury or Illness, form DWC-1 (Rev. 11/94).
  2. Supervisor's Investigation Report.
- If emergency medical treatment is required, treatment may be immediately obtained at a hospital emergency room without prior authorization from Protegrity, then contact the W/C Coordinator.

## Contact the University's Workers' Compensation Office:

- If you have questions regarding authorized medical providers for your work location.
- For assistance completing your time card (if receiving workers' compensation benefits).

---

---

# EHS Training Corner

Look to this area for information on training EHS offers. This quarter, we would like to highlight the following training:

## Right-to-Know/Hazard Communication

Employers must provide information and training to their employees about the hazardous chemicals to which they may be exposed in the workplace.

Laboratory employees are required to receive this training on an annual basis, while other employees receive it on a biennial schedule.

This training is required by the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard and Florida Right to Know Act.

Topics covered include:

- General Chemical Safety
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- Locations and means of obtaining MSDSs
- Chemical Labeling
- Chemical Spill Procedures
- Personal Protective Equipment

For more information on this class or on other classes EH&S offers, feel free to visit our training web site at [www.safety.fsu.edu/training.html](http://www.safety.fsu.edu/training.html).

- If you continue to have work-related problems and need additional medical care.
- For assistance identifying modified duty work within your unit that is within your restriction.

The following phone numbers are for quick reference and will be needed to obtain medical authorization.

FSU W/C Coordinator, (850) 644-7684  
Environmental Health &  
Safety

Protegrity Services, (800) 230-6920  
Case Manager

Protegrity Services, (800) 424-6689  
Reporting an Injury

---

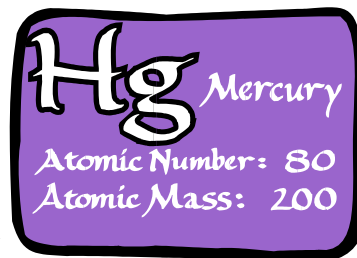
---

# Mercury-The William Johnston Building Incident

During the week of August 21, 2001 a mercury spill occurred on campus. Many people were affected due to the closure of the Johnston Building for four days, while the University incurred some unexpected costs. Like many other elements and compounds, mercury can be dangerous.

After a barometer spilled its contents during a move, small droplets of mercury were scattered throughout the major hallways of the William Johnston Building. The situation was made worse as people walked on it forcing it into corners and the carpets, creating a greater surface area and more evaporation potential. During the period of time that the building was occupied, the levels in the air were safe; however, since it was there (a place it shouldn't have been), the potential for long-term exposure required immediate mitigation.

The removal of mercury droplets can be as simple as vacuuming with specially filtered units, if the mercury can be seen. However, once it was in the carpet and the cracks of the floor, removal became much harder. Carpet cannot be decontaminated effectively by vacuuming, so removal of the carpet was the only option. On hard floors, chemical removal was necessary. The waste was handled in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.



Mercury is an element that has had many uses and has been used for literally hundreds of years in industrial applications. A silvery dense liquid at room temperature, one of the most common current uses is in thermometers. Mercury is toxic if there is a high enough exposure. When mercury is left exposed, it can evaporate at room temperature and the vapors present one of the quickest routes of exposure, inhalation.

So, what's wrong with mercury? Like most materials, there are many factors that determine the potential impact from exposure. Factors such as chemical form, quantity, duration of exposure and many biological factors all work to determine what harm or, in some instances, benefits might arise. Some materials, like vitamins, have a range for biological effects; if you get too little or too much there are potential health impacts. However, some materials, like mercury, have no "minimum daily requirement." This does not mean that you become sick from any exposure, just that the body does fine without any exposure, so exposure is controlled and minimized.

Mercury has been identified as a major problem in many areas of the world, including the Everglades and is even present in many of the fish found in and around Florida. To help do our part, EH&S has worked with many departments on campus to replace mercury thermometers with less toxic types. To date over 4,500 thermometers have been exchanged.

Everyone needs to know what types of materials are present in their workspaces and how to ensure that they are used and stored correctly. Everyone should look over their work areas and identify any hazardous or potentially hazardous materials. If you are unsure as to the relative hazard, give us a call and we can assist you in making that determination. When it comes time to use those materials, and especially if you have to move them, it is important to do so safely. Always ensure that the materials are stored, transported and used in a safe manner. Finally, it is very important to ensure proper disposal. Contact us for disposal procedures.

*EH&S Wishes You a Safe and Happy Holiday Season*



## **EMERGENCY EVACUATION GUIDE**

### **L-E-A-V-E**

**Listen**-If the alarm sounds, ALL persons SHALL evacuate the building.

**Exit**-All persons should leave via the nearest exit  
\*\*\*\*DO NOT USE ELEVATORS\*\*\*\*  
Move away from the building at least 100 ft (30+ meters). You may also be asked to move even further away.

**Assist**-As you exit, assist others who may be having difficulties. No one shall go back into the building for any reason until given permission to do so by the Police or Fire personnel.

**Verify**-All supervisors or instructors should designate a meeting point for all employees and students. This is to help determine if anyone is missing. If it is known that someone is missing, and there is a real emergency event, the supervisor or instructor should inform the Police.

**Evaluate**-Keep alert for changing situations and instructions from emergency personnel.

## **HOLIDAY DECORATION REMINDERS**

- Natural vegetation (trees, wreathes, hay, straw, corn stalks, etc.) are not to be used as decorations.
- All lights, or other electrical devices should be UL listed, in good condition, and turned off at the end of the day.
- Extension cords should not be used.
- Decorations should not interfere with exit or emergency lights, exit doors or pathways, extinguishers or sprinklers.
- Lit candles are not permitted in University facilities.

Environmental Health and Safety  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4109

**Non-Profit Organization**  
**U.S. Postage Paid**  
**Permit 55**