



*Environmental Health
Safety*

Guardian

Florida State University

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Before You Start, Be Safety Smart

A Newsletter of the
FSU

EHS

Department

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Fire Prevention Month

October is Fire Prevention Month and FSU is providing Fire Prevention displays and educational materials to promote this important message on campus. The 10th anniversary of September 11th reminds us of the dangers first responders encounter while trying to ensure public safety. There are many things that we can do to help minimize the dangers of their jobs. The most important thing that we can do is to evacuate the building when a fire alarm occurs. If firefighters believe that there are building occupants in danger, they will delay fire suppression activities

and perform search and rescue. This is one of the most dangerous activities firefighters perform in the line of duty. Hiding in your office to avoid having to evacuate during fire alarms puts their lives and the lives of other building occupants in danger and is illegal. It is better to assume that any alarm that occurs in a building is not a drill and to evacuate to a safe location outside of the building. Avoid using the elevators because the fire department may need them to move personnel and equipment. You could also become trapped inside of an elevator in the event of a building fire. Stairwells are fire rated enclosures and should be used for evacuation. If someone with disabilities cannot evacuate when an alarm occurs they should pull the nearest fire alarm and go inside of the stairwell. This will alert the



FSU ALERT Made Easy

Florida State University's emergency notification and warning system, *FSU ALERT*, has long been highly regarded as one of the most progressive systems of any institution in the nation. Even Reader's Digest magazine rated FSU as one of the safest universities in large part due to *FSU ALERT*. With up to thirty-two (32) different means of emergency

communication, FSU has all the bases covered. It was one of the first to utilize social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, integrate a mobile device application called FSU Mobile, and take over the computers in classrooms. The drawback to having so many delivery methods was that it took time to activate each one.

Consider the best case scenario as little as two years ago. An expert in using the *FSU ALERT* system is monitoring the approach of some severe weather. A tornado watch is in effect, the radars are spinning, and all the steps needed to send an *FSU ALERT* are queued up, ready to go. Then, the National Weather Service issues a tornado warning. It's show time.



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What is BPA?

Is it safe?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Bisphenol A, or BPA, was one of a number of chemicals surveyed in human populations in a study of potential exposures to environmental chemicals performed in 2003-2004. BPA was found in nearly all the human urine samples tested, indicating widespread exposures to populations in the United States.

BPA exposure to laboratory animals has been shown to have an adverse impact on metabolism, reproductive systems, and cardiovascular systems, but the effect of low-level exposures to humans is unknown. In 2008, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) published a report supporting the safety of current low levels of human exposure, but results of more recent studies have led to increased concerns regarding the potential effects of BPA exposure on brain development of fetuses, infants and young children. These concerns have led the FDA to pursue further studies and to recommend manufacturing changes with a goal of reducing BPA in the food supply by eliminating BPA in baby bottles and infant feeding cups and supporting the development of alternative coatings for the insides of food can linings.

What should the public do?

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends that parents be aware of the potential for BPA in baby bottles and infant formula cans, but suggest that no significant changes be made in a baby's diet without discussion with the baby's doctor or nurse. 90% of the manufacturers of infant bottles in the United States discontinued the use of BPA in 2009. In general, children's plastic toys currently manufactured in the United States do not contain BPA.

Avoid heating foods or formula in plastic containers that may contain BPA. Small amounts of BPA may be contained in food containment or packaging material and it is recommended not to heat water and infant formula in bottles or containers that may have trace amounts of BPA. As a good household practice, only use containers marked 'dishwasher safe'

in the dishwasher and only use 'microwave safe' marked containers in the microwave. Plastic containers have recycle codes on the bottom, and some – but not all – plastics that are marked with the recycle codes 3 or 7 may contain BPA.

Where can I find more information?

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

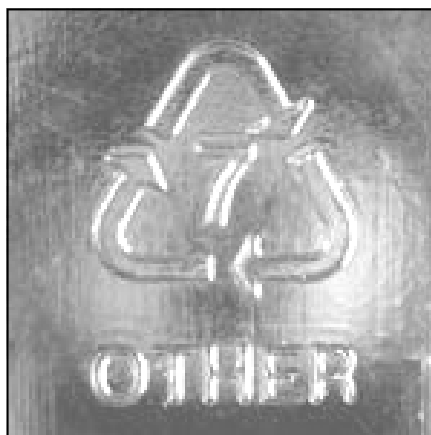
www.fda.gov

National Toxicology Program

ntp.niehs.nih.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.hhs.gov



Opportunities in October to Dispose of Unwanted Drugs

In the Spring 2010 issue of the *Guardian* an article was featured that discussed the environmental impacts of improper disposal of drugs. During the month of October there are two independent events that provide an opportunity for the safe and proper disposal of drugs; "National Take Back Initiative" and "Operation Medicine Cabinet".

Got Drugs? National Take Back Initiative

The United States Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration is conducting the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on Saturday, October 29, 2011, from 10:00 am-2:00 pm to provide a venue for persons who want to dispose of unwanted and unused prescription drugs.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day addresses a vital public safety

and public health issue. More than seven million Americans currently abuse prescription drugs, according to the 2009 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Each day, approximately, 2,500 teens use prescription drugs to get high for the first time according to the Partnership for a Drug Free America. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including the home medicine cabinet. You can find out more at www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/.

Operation Medicine Cabinet: Free Medicine Collection Event

The Southern Waste Information Exchange, Inc., the Florida State University's Center for Biomedical and Toxicological Research, local businesses, and state and local agencies have teamed up to sponsor "Operation Medicine Cabinet". The event will take place on Saturday, October 15, 2011 from 11:00 am -3:00 pm. The location is Costco, Mahan Drive (4067 Lagniappe Way, Tallahassee, FL). Bring your unwanted or unneeded medications to this free collection event. Please make sure to keep medications in original container, keep labels on containers and cross through personal information on containers. Sharps, medical wastes and thermometers will not be accepted. This event is for individual residents of Tallahassee and Leon County. Prescription and other medications from doctor's offices, nursing homes, hospitals and other institutional sources will **not be accepted**. Contact the Southern Waste Information Exchange, Inc. for more information: 386-6280 • info@swix.ws



Florida State University Recognized by the Florida Department of Financial Services for its Loss Prevention Achievement

Earlier this year the Florida State University was awarded 2nd Place in the State of Florida large agency category for reducing casualty claims costs. FSU achieved a 20% reduction in costs. This award recognized FSU's commitment to employee safety and the excellent work of the Environmental Health and Safety Department. However, EH&S recognizes that to achieve this type of success requires partnerships with all University departments and a commitment to safety from all employees. EH&S offers its congratulations to all FSU departments on receiving this important award. Some of the key efforts that make the University's loss prevention initiatives a success are highlighted below.

Accident Investigations: All accident reports are reviewed and investigated by loss prevention staff to identify causation. The information gathered during the accident investigation is used to provide recommendations on how to prevent occurrences in the future. The findings of accident investigations are utilized in training initiatives to raise awareness amongst employees.



Facility Inspections: Facility inspections are conducted to identify and correct unsafe conditions or work practices. EH&S staff and other department staff throughout the University routinely conduct formal and informal facility and safety equipment inspections. Examples of targeted facilities include research laboratories, workshops, stormwater systems, fire safety and suppression systems, and premises inspections.

Hazardous Conditions Identification and Response: All employees of the University are encouraged to report unsafe conditions. EH&S responds routinely to

reports of hazardous conditions throughout campus to ensure corrective actions are taken to mitigate the hazard.

Return-to-Work Program: EH&S and Human Resources work closely with injured employees to bring them back to work as soon as medically possible based on the functional limitations and restrictions provided by the treating physician. The goal of this effort is to reduce the number of lost time days and the associated adverse impacts to employee morale and productivity.

Training: EH&S offers ongoing occupational health and safety training throughout the year to faculty, staff, and students.

Litigation and Mediation: EH&S supports legal counsel and Human Resources to ensure that when a legal action is brought against the University the best possible defense is provided.

Safety Committees: The University has established a number of safety committees throughout campus. These committees meet routinely to address safety and loss prevention efforts. EH&S staff actively participate in safety committees.

Research Support: EH&S through its Biological, Chemical, Laboratory and Radiation Safety Offices provides research and environmental compliance support to researchers at the University. This support ensures that research is conducted in a safe, secure, and environmentally compliant manner.

These efforts are a few of the highlights of FSU's loss prevention efforts. EH&S is only one component of a much larger University effort to mitigate and reduce losses to the University. The ongoing success of our loss prevention initiatives will continue to require a team effort from all University departments.

OSHA Issues Hazard Alert on the Dangers of Using Scissor Lifts

On July 6, 2011 the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued a hazard alert about the dangers of using scissor lifts. Scissor lifts are portable, hydraulic-powered lifts that are used for a variety of activities around campus from building maintenance to filming events and functions. The hazards of scissor lifts were tragically realized last October when



a 20-year-old University of Notre Dame student employee was killed while filming the team's football practice from a scissor lift that was blown over by high winds. The worker, who reportedly was not trained to properly

operate the equipment, raised the lift more than 39 feet into the air on a day in which winds exceeded 50 miles per hour.

To minimize scissor lift hazards departments should establish safe work practices, including inspecting the lift before use; safely moving, positioning, and stabilizing the lift; selecting safe work locations; and identifying weather conditions that prevent use. Additional key safety practices include putting the scissor lift on a firm level surface, setting brakes and stabilizing the lift before raising it, and maintaining a 10 foot clearance from electrical power sources and overhead hazards such as tree branches. Hazards can be further reduced by training workers on how to operate scissor lifts safely, making sure that the scissor lift has a guardrail system for fall protection, and operating and maintaining the lift according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Environmental Health & Safety staff are available to provide consultation on the safe use of scissor lifts. If you would like additional information please contact EH&S.

In the 2009 Winter edition of the Guardian, EH&S provided OSHA Safety Tips for Aerial Lifts. This is available on the EH&S website at www.safety.fsu.edu/guardian09.win.pdf.

FSU ALERT Continued from Page 1

It then takes that expert approximately 10 minutes to go through all the steps it takes to send an *FSU ALERT* through only half of the 32 delivery methods.

Once the systems have been activated, technology hums with activity. The sirens blare within 10 seconds. The Alerts Page (alerts.fsu.edu) is updated within 2

minutes. SMS text messages start popping up on phones all over campus within 15 minutes. E-mails are filling up mailboxes within 45 minutes. Yes, 45 minutes, and that is under the best of conditions.

FSU faced the very real possibility that some people could receive their warnings right as the warning was expiring and well after the threat had passed. The hope was that one of the faster delivery methods such as sirens, blue lights, or text messages would reach them first.

FSU realized that in some cases, when seconds can make the difference between life and death, taking minutes to alert and warn people is unacceptable. Sadly enough, FSU was not alone. This level of performance from an emergency notification system was considered normal around the country. Normal was not good enough for FSU.

Over the last year, FSU has made a number of changes behind the scenes to improve the performance of the *FSU ALERT* system. The first was to contract with Blackboard Connect to replace some of the delivery systems. Instantly, we saw amazing improvements. Text messages and e-mails are now delivered in 3 minutes or less. The total *FSU ALERT* delivery process was reduced from 55 minutes to 13.

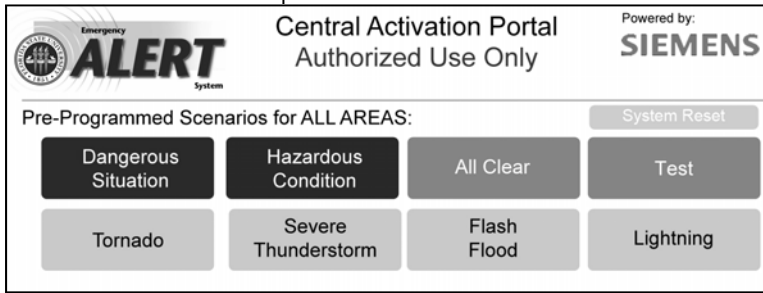
However, keep in mind that is under the best case scenario where we can see the threat coming. Most emergencies are no-notice, and Murphy's Law dictates that will occur at inconvenient hours, like 2:30 am. The added time it takes to wake

up, boot up a laptop, connect to the internet, start various software applications and websites isn't pretty. That is still for the expert. What if he is on vacation? What if the backup-to-the-backup needed to do it? You just went

secondary delivery methods. That's it. Done.

So now, let's look at the worst case scenario. A no notice act of violence is threatening lives by the second at 2:30 am. How long will that take? No problem! With the *FSU ALERT* "easy button," an FSU Police dispatcher can press a single button and have sirens blaring within 5 seconds, websites updating within 10 seconds, Facebook posts within 1 minute, Tweets out within 1 minute, SMS text messages delivering within 3 minutes, e-mails filling mailboxes within 3 minutes, and so on. Total delivery time: 3 minutes or less. Welcome to the new "normal".

For more information, visit www.safety.fsu.edu/EmergencyManagement/fsualert.html



from expert to novice. We won't even wager a guess at how long he would take at 2:30 am.

FSU needed an easier way to activate its *FSU ALERT* system. Wouldn't it be nice if life were like a Staples commercial? We can slap a big red button and everything just happens. We could smile and say "that was easy!" Well, now we can.

FSU contracted with Siemens Corporation to develop the *FSU ALERT* "easy button," the first of its kind in the nation. A bright yellow box hangs from the wall of the FSU Police dispatch office, which is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Open the door and a series of buttons are available, each labeled accordingly: Tornado Warning, Severe Thunderstorm Warning, Dangerous Situation, Hazardous Condition, and so on. Press the appropriate button for the given situation and instantly *FSU ALERT* messages are distributed via the 19 primary and

Fire Continued from Page 1

fire department to their location so they can be assisted.

There have been fires on the FSU campus in the past. In the late 1960s the Westcott building sustained a fire that resulted in significant damage. At other universities student lives have been lost from burning candles in student housing. Candles and incense are now prohibited on campus. Fires caused by unattended cooking are the leading cause of fires in student housing across the country. Laboratory equipment that is not approved for use around flammable liquids can become an ignition source and should not be used around flammable solvents. During Fire Prevention Month in October remember our first responders and the things you can do to keep yourself and them safe.



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