



Volume 2 Number 2 ■ Spring 2012

Celebrating Safety & Health Making it Work

NAOSH Week, May 6–12, 2012



In past years, our themes have been How Safe are You? and What's your Plan? This year, let's focus on **Making it Work!**

The goal of North America Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week is to focus employers, employees, partners and the public on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace, at home, and in the community.

In support of NAOSH Week (May 6–12, 2012), Workplace Safety and Environmental Protection (WSEP) has organized a number of events, including sessions on new initiatives in health and safety, as well as an exhibition and trade show. You are all invited to come and meet your health and safety service providers on campus, see the latest technologies in health and safety, and

learn what's new in health and safety programming.

In addition to the public events that week, WSEP will be holding a conversation café for safety committee members. At this forum, committee members will discuss the current state of health and safety at the university, discuss challenges, and share their own experiences. The information gathered from the forum will inform improvements to current health and safety programming, services, and support.

We invite everyone to attend the planned activities (see page 4). Together, we can make health and safety work! ■

NAOSH Week is led by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE) in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), and Threads of Life, in concert with the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) and partners in Mexico.



See listing of **NAOSH Week activities** on page 4 . . .

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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Workplace Safety & Environmental Protection

The Truth about Asbestos



Asbestos is a common name for a number of fibrous silicate minerals prized for their resistance to heat, light, and chemicals. Historically, these qualities made asbestos ideal for a wide variety of uses, including insulation and fireproofing. At the U of S, asbestos can be found primarily in insulating wraps surrounding steam pipes, in mechanical rooms, and in fire retardant sprays on structural steel.

Management Division (FMD), all campus buildings are audited and asbestos is identified, clearly labeled, and carefully monitored. Based on the results of this asbestos audit, priorities are established for asbestos abatement.

While abatement often involves the safe removal and disposal of asbestos, there are other means of controlling asbestos and asbestos-bearing materials.

Asbestos is only dangerous when it is airborne and people breathe in the fibres.

In the 1960s, researchers discovered that inhalation of airborne asbestos fibres is a serious health hazard. Breathing in asbestos can cause thickening and scarring of lung tissues, known as asbestosis. Inhalation of asbestos can also cause cancers such as mesothelioma, a form of cancer that attacks the pleura (membrane) surrounding the lungs. For this reason, the construction industry in Canada abandoned the use of asbestos in the early 1970s.

Asbestos is only dangerous when it is airborne and people breathe in the fibres. When contained in a solid form (wrapped securely around pipes, for example), it does not pose a hazard. However, during renovation or maintenance projects where asbestos is disturbed, special work procedures must be followed.

As part of the university's Asbestos Management Program, led by Facilities

For example, it can be enclosed or encapsulated to prevent building occupants from being exposed to the fibers. The people responsible for these asbestos abatement procedures and FMD's trades personnel, are all well-trained in proper asbestos-handling to ensure their safety and the safety of building occupants.

Finally, through public information sessions, FMD clarifies misconceptions about asbestos, shares information with the campus community about what building occupants can expect during abatement procedures, and answers questions. If you would like more information about asbestos and the university's asbestos abatement program, contact Colleen Funk, the Asbestos Management Coordinator, at 966-2020, or call WSEP at 966-4700. ■

Are Young Workers Safe at Work?

Every year, thousands of youth are injured in the workplace, many of them within days of starting a new job. In Saskatchewan, one in five work-related injuries involve workers under the age of 25, and nearly half of all reported injuries involve workers under the age of 34.

Young workers are enthusiastic and hard working, but they tend to take greater risks than more experienced workers, and they are often reluctant to ask questions for fear of appearing as though they don't know what they are doing.

Employers play a very important role in promoting and maintaining a safe workplace! If you employ young workers, including students, please ensure they



receive appropriate training and are proficient in the tasks they are to perform. As with all workers, it is critical that young workers fully understand the hazards in their workplace and how to protect themselves. Young workers need more supervision in the beginning, so be there to observe, guide, and answer questions.

If you have children who have joined the workforce, you also play an important role in supporting their health and safety in the workplace. Please speak with your children, help them understand their rights—they have a right to ask questions and to seek help if they are uncertain about work practices or activities. ■

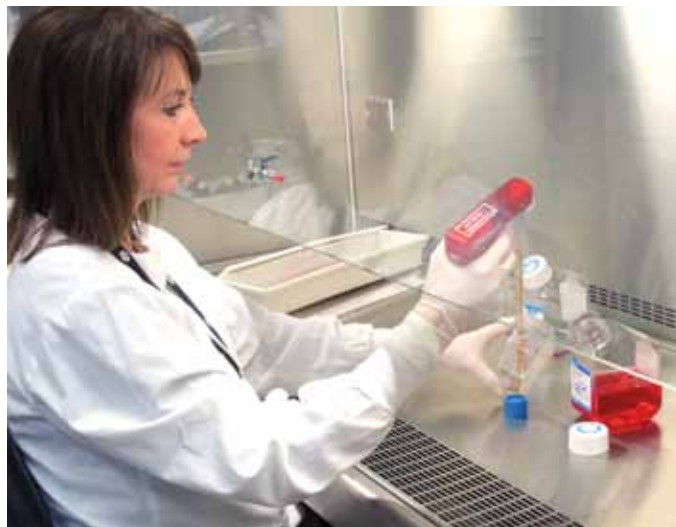
Changing Landscape in Biosafety

A growing number of faculty, staff, and students on campus routinely work with biohazardous materials that could pose a health risk to humans, animals, plants, or the environment. This growing area of research touches almost all areas of science—from natural sciences, to cancer research, vaccine development, animal health, engineering, and research in agriculture. In fact, the number of individuals engaged in this type of work on campus has more than doubled in the last five years, and we are not alone. Research and industrial activities involving biohazardous materials is on the rise at universities across North America and in industry.

Surprisingly, there are few regulations in Canada specifically governing the production or use of biohazardous materials other than regulations for importing these types of materials. National guidelines and standards supporting best practices in biosafety do exist but, in many cases, are voluntary.

The landscape is beginning to change. In June 2009, the Human Pathogens and Toxins Act (HPTA) became law in Canada. HPTA requires the development of a safety and security regime to protect the health and safety of the public against the risks posed by human pathogens and toxins. The new act also better aligns Canada's legislative framework in biosafety with the international community.

In 2012, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) launched national consultations on the development of regulations to support the new act. It is anticipated that these new regulations, which will govern the licensing of facilities that import, use, store, and dispose of biohazardous materials, will take force by 2016. When put into practice, the new regulatory framework will harmonize with standards and requirements of other regulatory agencies, such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.



In preparation for this changing regulatory regime, Workplace Safety and Environmental Protection (WSEP), in concert with the Biosafety Advisory Committee, has been actively involved in the PHAC consultation process. We have revamped our biosafety program to align with the new legislation, and with evolving best practices in biosafety. The result will be a retooled institutional Biosafety Code of Practice, and a suite of new supporting procedures and processes.

To learn more about what is going on in biosafety, consider attending our NAOSH week seminar, the Changing Landscape in Biosafety, on May 7. You can also call WSEP at 966-4700. ■

New Hazardous Waste Disposal Standard



Did you know that each year the university generates 40,000 litres and more than 250,000 kilograms of chemical, biological, and nuclear hazardous waste? The bulk of this waste is collected and managed at the Workplace Safety and Environmental Protection (WSEP) Waste Management Facility, with assistance from other external service providers.

In support of environmental protection, WSEP has developed a new Hazardous Waste Disposal Standard. Replacing the existing manual, the new standard clarifies and simplifies accepted practices for the proper and responsible disposal of hazardous materials generated through research, academics, or other activities. The new standard is available on WSEP's website, www.usask.ca/wsep.

In addition, WSEP is conducting a hazardous materials survey from May 7

to May 18. This survey will improve our current understanding of the types of waste generated on campus and raise awareness about available services. The results of the survey will also help inform environmental protection programming and service delivery. Please take the time to complete the survey. A link to the survey will be available on our website at www.usask.ca/wsep.

For more information about the new Hazardous Waste Disposal Standard or the upcoming survey, please contact Jeff Lindsay at jeff.lindsay@usask.ca or call 966-2379. ■

As part of the **NAOSH Week** activities, stop by our facility on May 9, to see first-hand what happens to chemical, biological, and radioactive waste at the U of S.

Monday, May 7

Ergonomic Solutions for Computer Users, 9:00–10:00 am (College 280) Do you have aches and pains that might be related to your workstation? Ergo Canada will provide an introduction to ergonomics and demonstrate various ergonomic devices and accessories. Come and see what's new and learn how these tools can make your workstation more comfortable and efficient.

Changing Landscape in Biosafety, 1:00–2:00 pm (Ag 5C61) Did you know that nearly 2,000 faculty, staff, and students on campus routinely work with biohazardous materials that could pose a health risk to humans, animals, plants, or the environment? Come and learn about the legislative framework governing the use of biohazardous materials in Canada and the new biosafety programming on campus in support of the changing landscape in biosafety.

Tuesday, May 8

Maintaining a Safe Environment for Work and Study, 1:30–2:30 pm (2E25 Ag) The U of S remains committed to maintaining a safe environment for work and study. Representatives from Campus Safety and Risk Management will discuss the programs and resources used to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to a major emergency on campus.

Wednesday, May 9

Acquired Allergies and Sensitivities in the Workplace, 9:00–10:00 am (Arts 214) Did you know you could acquire allergies and sensitivities in the workplace? Join us as we discuss workplace acquired allergies and sensitivities and how you can protect yourself.

The New Hazardous Waste Disposal Standard, 1:00–2:00 pm (Waste Management Facility, 113 North Road) How do you collect, handle, and dispose of hazardous waste in your area? This session will review old procedures and introduce new ones for handling hazardous waste. It is recommended for anyone who generates hazardous waste at the U of S.

Waste Management Facility Open House and Facility Tour, 2:00–4:00 pm (Waste Management Facility, 113 North Road) Come and see firsthand what happens to chemical, biological, and radioactive waste at the U of S.

Thursday, May 10

What's New in Health & Safety Exhibition, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm (Ag 1D51) Join WSEP, Campus Safety, and other external vendors, including Century Vallen, Fischer Scientific, VWR, and Saskatoon Fire and Protective Services, to learn about the latest health and safety products and services.

Friday, May 11

New Electrical Safety Guide for Non-Electrical Workers, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm (Ag 5C61) Are your methods safe? Are you aware of the hazards? The *Electrical Safety Guide for Non-Electrical Workers* is intended to provide general electrical safety principles and best practices for faculty, staff, and students to follow during work, research, and academic activities where electrical hazards exist.

New Hearing Conservation Program, 2:00–3:00 pm (Geol 155) Are you working in environments with elevated noise levels? The Hearing Conservation Program has been developed to protect faculty, staff, students, and visitors from noise-related injury and to establish minimum requirements for assessment, control, and monitoring of noise-related hazards in the workplace. Come learn about the program and how it may impact you.

Sustainability Here to Stay

After sustainability was identified as a goal in the university's Second Integrated Plan, a campus-wide Sustainability Commitment Working Group was established to define what this commitment would mean for our university. Led by Julia Jones, FMD director of Finance and Administration, and Alec Aiken, professor, Geography and Planning, the working group's mission was to engage the university and its extended community in all aspects of sustainability and collectively develop a plan for sustainability at the U of S.

Until now, the university's sustainability programs, initiatives, and projects have been undertaken in a piecemeal manner without the benefit of a unified vision. The working group's challenge was to figure out how to make the transition from a "campus featuring sustainability" to a "campus infused with sustainability."

Over the course of about two years, they collected ideas and information from across campus through surveys, workshops, and lots of meetings. As their work proceeded, it became clear that campus sustainability is not just a matter of how we operate and manage buildings and grounds; it is also a result of what we teach, the research we do, the rules that govern our organization, and how we relate to the broader community. As a result, the following definition and vision for sustainability at the U of S were developed:

- **Our Definition:** Sustainability is the stewardship of the natural environment in a socially and economically responsible manner that meets the needs of both present and future generations.
- **Our Vision:** Every member of the university community will act sustainably in all areas of campus life—education, research, operations, governance and community engagement.

Five subcommittees—involving about 30 people from across campus—were tasked with developing sustainability recommendations for each of the identified areas of campus life: education, research, operations, governance, and community engagement. Together, their recommendations make up the draft "Campus Sustainability Plan," which is now available for review and comment by the campus community. You can find the plan at www.sustainus.usask.ca/csp.

How the campus responds to the draft plan will significantly influence our next steps, but one thing is clear—sustainability is here to stay! It's prominence in the Third Integrated Plan certainly supports this. ■

About Safety Matters

The *Safety Matters* newsletter is intended to raise awareness of the importance of health and safety, and to provide the campus community with regular updates on current and upcoming events in health, safety, and environmental protection at the university.

We value your opinion. If you have comments about the newsletter or suggestions for articles in upcoming issues, please email us at wsep@usask.ca.