NOAA's National Weather Service

STAT Safety Talk and Tips

Eastern Region's Environmental Safety and Health Newsletter

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Paper Shredder Safety

A paper shredder offers an easy way to destroy a document, and helps reduce concerns about privacy. Unfortunately, Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicates a total of about 2,000 people were treated in hospitals for business and office machine injuries during 2003, and about 30% of those involved lacerations to the fingers from paper shredders. Most of the injuries were due to operator inattention or error.

If you're about to use a paper shredder, be sure to follow some simple precautions, such as:

- Never put fingers or objects other than paper (like paper clips or staples) into the shredder feed opening.
- Keep jewelry, long hair, ties, lanyards, etc. away from the paper shredder feed opening.
- Feed paper smoothly into the shredder, not forcing the paper in.

Other paper shredder safety tips include:

- If there is a paper jam, and forward and reverse buttons don't move the paper, disconnect the power source and contact a qualified person to make repairs. Don't overheat or burn out the motor.
- If the shredder motor overheats, turn off the shredder for at least 15 minutes, allowing the motor to cool before using again.
- Locate the paper shredder and its power cord outside of foot traffic areas.

A paper shredder is a simple tool to use and is very safe and effective when used correctly, within manufacturer's specifications. But even when using a paper shredder, remember safety first, last, and always!

Information courtesy of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation, through Stevens OSHA On-line.

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Household Chemical Safety

Household Chemical Safety

Chemicals are a natural and important part of our environment. Even though we often don't think about it, we use chemicals every day, whether at work or at home.

Many chemicals found in the home are potentially dangerous. The following information on chemical safety is provided for your safety.

The danger of common household chemicals

A lesson learned

The following is a personal story of how household chemicals impacted my family.

My wife was cleaning the bathroom for a party we were giving later that afternoon. She decided to quickly clean the bathroom with a cleaner. After the party, she started complaining that her eye was bothering her.

She woke up the next morning asking to go to the emergency room. The doctor looked for something in her eye or a scratch and didn't see anything. He recommended an over-the-counter medicine for her to use and recommended that she go to the eye doctor the next day.

By the next morning her eye was completely shut. We went to our eye doctor, who quickly sent us to an ophthalmologist. The doctor told us that the cornea was completely gone and the second layer of the eye was badly infected. The doctor couldn't guarantee that her sight would return to normal. She further told us that the last time she saw such a serious eye injury was as a result of a chemical burn. At that point, I remembered the shower cleaner.

When I returned home, I immediately checked out the cleaner and noticed it contained phosphoric acid, which obviously ate away the cornea. Reading the label on the back of the cleaner, raised some concern about the product, and the label read a lot safer to use than the Material Data Safety Sheet.

The good news is the cornea grew back within a week and a half, but the moment was scary for both my wife and myself. But we also learned the seriousness of household chemicals safety.

Please read the rest of this section to learn more about how to protect your family and yourself.

Household Chemical Safety Checklist

⇒ Read the label before you buy any chemical.
⇒ Have the required safety equipment, such as rubber gloves and/or safety glasses. Follow label instructions.
⇒ Dispose of all unmarked chemicals.
⇒ Never mix chemicals. For example, ammonia and bleach form a hazardous gas.
⇒ Do not sniff chemicals.
⇒ Keep all chemicals away from young children.
⇒ Keep Syrup of Ipecac on hand.
⇒ Keep the telephone number of your poison control center.

Source: University Of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics

What Is A Toxic Substance?

Many of the products you find in your home may have toxic substances. These products include:

* Drain Cleaners
* Oven Cleaners
* Laundry Detergents
* Floor or Furniture Polish
* Paints
* Pesticides

While these products are useful at home, some of the chemicals in these products can irritate your skin, eyes, nose and throat, or can even poison you—*so be careful.*

Household Chemical Safety—Continued

What's On A Label?

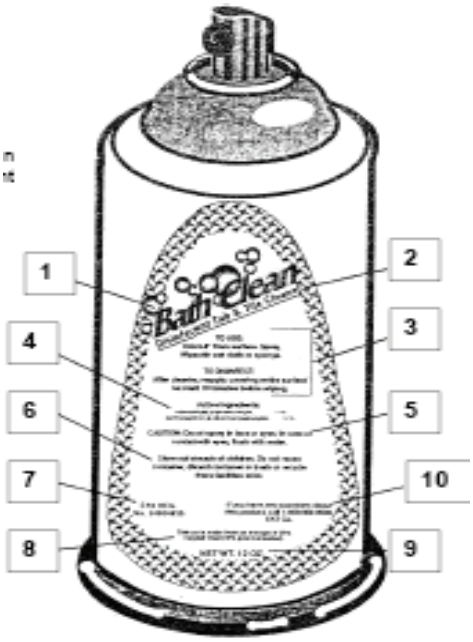
1) Product Name—Identifies the product.

2) Product type—identifies the type of product it is.

3) Direction For Use– Explains how to use the product

4) Ingredients—Explains what chemicals make up the product.

5) Human Safety Information—Provides CAUTION, Warning OR Danger statements.



Source: City and County Of Honolulu Department Of Human Resources

What's On A Label? (Cont.)

6) Storage and/or Disposal Information—provides special guidelines for properly storing and/or discarding a product.

7) EPA Registration Number.

8) Environmental Information—Provides special environmental information or instructions.

9) Net Weight or Volume—Lists the amount of the product in the container.

10) Manufacturer's Name Address, and/or Toll-Free Number.

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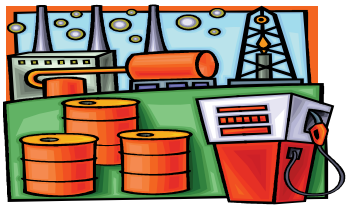
EXTRA- Gasoline Saving Tips



- If you have an option of more than one vehicle to drive, choose the one that gets the best gas mileage.
- Combine several trips into one, if possible.
- Ensure that vehicles get regular tune ups and maintenance checks.
- Be sure that the tires are properly inflated and aligned.
- Avoid rapid starts and stops.
- Observe the posted speed limit.
- Use overdrive, if available.
- Use cruise control on the open highway.
- During hot weather, consider opening the windows of the vehicle at least 30 minutes before a trip to reduce the amount of air conditioning needed.
- Avoid long idles. Limit warming up the vehicle in winter. Rather than use the drive up window, park the vehicle and walk into a fast food restaurant.
- Avoid carrying unneeded items, especially heavy ones in the vehicle.

Do's and Don'ts—Chemical Safety

DO

- Store cleaning products in a locked closet or cabinet, away from food, and not accessible to children.
- Store products in their original containers and never remove the product labels.
- To avoid a chemical accident, schedule routine cleaning of surfaces and dish washing when there is a lull of activities.
- Put the product away immediately.
- Be aware that some cleaning products—like oven or drain cleaners—present a significant hazard.
- Train staff in proper handling, use, storage and safety procedures.
- Dispose of empty cleaning containers carefully.

DON'T

- Mix cleaning products.
- Mix chlorine bleach or any product containing chlorine bleach with any other cleaning agents.
- Allow distractions or interruptions when using household chemicals.
- Leave cleaning buckets containing even small amounts of liquid unattended.

Drowsy Driving: The Silent Killer

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), falling asleep at the wheel accounts for more than 100,000 reported crashes per year. The crashes result in 71,000 injuries and 1550 deaths each year. "We have only begun to scratch the surface in determining how large the problem of drowsy driving really is," said Darrel Drobnich, NSF senior director of Government and Transportation Affairs, to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. The New York State Police estimated that 40 percent of all fatal crashes along the New York Thruway were the result of a driver falling asleep at the wheel.

There is no doubt that most (if not all) of us have driven while tired at one or more times in our careers with the National Weather Service (NWS). The NSF has identified specific at-risk groups which include shift workers (**especially** rotating shift workers), people who work long hours, and those who travel a lot. In 2002, it was estimated that between 20 and 30% of people who work shifts had at least one drowsy driving incident. There is no question that the NWS requires a large percentage of its workforce to work rotating shifts to carry out its mission. It is estimated that about 1 out of 3 people in the NWS works rotating shifts. In addition, most of us either have and/or will be required to work long hours during times of severe weather or floods. There are also some in our organization who travel widely across the nation and even overseas to attend conferences, meetings and workshops. Therefore, it is easy to see that many of us are at-risk for drowsy driving.

Besides injury and even death, the cost of drowsy driving can be very high and it may become higher. It is widely known that drowsy driving can be as hazardous as drunk driving and many states and the federal government are in the process of enacting laws that target drowsy drivers. Even without formal laws, there have been several drowsy driving incidents that have resulted in jail sentences. In addition, multi-million dollar settlements have been awarded to families of crash victims as a result of law suits brought up against the individuals, as well as the businesses whose employees were involved with drowsy driving incidents.

The costs could be very high to each and every one of us and even to our organization. So what can we do to reduce our risks of falling asleep at the wheel? If you find yourself nodding off or very tired before or during driving, don't drive or stop driving—pull off at the next exit, rest area or find a place to sleep for the night. If you can't stop for a long period of time, then take a nap—find a safe place to take a 15 to 20-minute nap. Consume caffeine, the equivalent of 2 cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours. If you are planning a long trip, try to get 7-9 hours of sleep before leaving. It is helpful to have a companion on long trips to help with the driving or at least to give you some company to increase your alertness. Take breaks while driving long distances! Don't use alcohol, or take medications that cause sleepiness.

Like many safety topics, common sense is most important. In this case, if you are excessively tired and find yourself behind (or about to get behind) the wheel, get some rest first, even if it is a short nap. Don't risk it!

For more information, check out the National Sleep Foundation's website on this topic at http://drowsydriving.org

- Source: National Sleep Foundation

The Environmental Corner—Recycling

The Four Basic Recycling Principles

1. **REDUCE** the amount of trash discarded
2. **REUSE** containers and products
3. **RECYCLE** products and use recycled materials and compost
4. **RESPOND** to the solid waste dilemma by reconsidering waste producing activities and by expressing preferences for less waste

Source: EPA

Tips for Reducing Solid Waste

Tip 1. Reduce the Amount of Packaging

Packaging serves many purposes. Its primary purpose is to protect and contain a product. But, some packaging is designed largely to enhance a product's attractiveness on the store shelf. Since packaging materials account for a large volume of the trash we generate, they provide a good opportunity for reducing waste.

- When choosing between two similar products, select the one with the least unnecessary packaging.
- At the grocery, consider whether it is necessary to purchase items in prepackaged containers when they can be bought unpackaged.
- Consider large or economy-sized items for household products that are used frequently.

Tip 2. Adopt Practices that Reduce Waste Toxicity

Reducing waste toxicity is another important component of source reduction. Some jobs around the home or office may require the use of products containing hazardous components. But, toxicity reduction can be achieved by following some simple guidelines.

- Take actions that use non-hazardous or less hazardous components to accomplish the task at hand.
- Learn about alternatives to household or office items containing hazardous substances.
- If you do need to use products with hazardous components, use only the amounts needed.

Tip 3. Consider Reusable Products

Many products are designed to be used more than once. Reusable products and containers often result in less waste. This helps reduce the cost of managing solid waste and conserves materials and resources.

- A mug or cup can be washed and used time and again, while disposable cups add to solid waste. Also, use cloth napkins and dishcloths rather than paper products.
- Recharged cartridges for laser printers, copiers and fax machines reduce waste and save money.
- When possible, use rechargeable batteries to reduce waste and keep toxic metals out of the waste stream.

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!

About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome. Please send all comments to Kevin Murray.