

SECO Safety and Environmental Compliance Office



"All nature wears one universal grin."

MARCH 2007

- Henry Fielding (1707-1754), Tom Thumb the Great, 1730.

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SECO'S ANNUAL WORKSHOP



Each year NOAA's Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO), sponsors a safety, health and environmental workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to provide the best information on safety, health and environmental management topics to all NOAA Line and Staff Offices safety and environmental representatives. Since much of NOAA's safety and environmental concerns revolve around activities that include climbing towers, shipboard operations, diving operations, aircraft operations, laboratory and field work, just to name a few, SECO has placed such a workshop on a high priority. This gathering of NOAA environmental, safety and health professionals will provide training on current topics as well as offer a forum for discussions involving critical issues facing each line office. The SECO Workshop is also an opportunity for attendees to:

Network with other Line/Staff Office personnel who share your issues and interests;

Hear about important recent regulatory developments that can impact your location from OSHA, NIOSH, EPA, etc.

Learn management tools that will help you become more effective;

Attend specific training programs;

Gather information from exhibitors on the latest technologies, products, and services;

If you have an idea for a workshop topic or a question about the NOAA SECO Workshop, please contact Janet Williams at 301-713-2870 or Janet.M.Williams@noaa.gov or visit the SECO website at <http://www.seco.noaa.gov> .

The workshop is scheduled for May 22-24, 2007 and will be held at NOAA Headquarters in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland.

Ben Bond, PA
Field Safety Manager



The only thing wrong with doing nothing is that you never know when you're finished.
~ Author Unknown

FACTOID

All federal workplaces are rated by their Incident Rate (IR) which is determined by totaling the number of hours worked and the number of OSHA recordable cases incurred during your rating period.

The OSHA Recordable Incident Rate is calculated by multiplying the number of recordable cases by 200,000, then dividing that number by the number of labor hours. The NOAA incident rate for the first four months in FY2007 is 1.20 or 1.2% of employees.

OSHA will use this IR (based on a full year) to determine if an agency's rate has increased which could trigger an OSHA Inspection. According to OSHA, agencies with incidents rates above 3.5% will be "visited" by OSHA Compliance Officers.



Let's Talk Safety Training



The Training Team is pleased to announce the arrival of the "New" Safety Training for Supervisors, formerly known as Stop Taking Avoidable Risks or STAR Training, which it should be noted, was previously only available in class room training. This program is also mandatory for all mid level managers and supervisory employees with less than 10 cumulative personnel reporting. (GS-15's and SES's with more than 10 cumulative personnel reporting must take the DuPont training course for senior managers.) Also new, is "Hot Work Permits" for any NOAA employee(s) who may be tasked with any welding, acetylene torch cutting, welding or brazing, a good course written by and for NOAA employees. The Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) course has gained popularity due to the many NOAA Facilities with above ground storage tanks. This course is now available on E-Learning.

Next up for the Training Team will be developing an Accident Investigation Training Course, as well as a Bloodborne Pathogens and Hazardous Communications course. The Training Team is working to simplify the process by having links placed on the SECO Training page that will whisk you from our page directly to the course on E-Learning. Take advantage of this great resource, save your Line Office some travel expenses by taking the training to them rather than sending them to the training and get your people up to speed by using WBT to get the Safety and Environmental training they need.



Relocatable Power Taps “RPTs”

(a.k.a. Strip Plugs, Power Strips, Power Taps, Temporary Power taps & Transient Voltage Surge Suppressors)

The History

These devices evolved from the advent of computers and their associated hardware components. The computer hard drive and associated monitor, printer, scanner, modem and so on required numerous receptacle outlets for power. It was not reasonable to expect the installation of numerous additional receptacle outlets in the “premises wiring system” by each computer.

The problem: Misuse...

There are many ways to misuse these devices and numerous standards which apply. Unfortunately, an all too typically found misuse of the device finds inappropriate loads plugged into it such as refrigerators, microwave ovens, coffee pots, space heaters, toasters, toaster ovens and other **high power loads**.

The fix ... Use them safely

Do:

- use RPTs for their intended use
- use with the intended equipment or loads
- avoid physical damage
- avoid exposure to water or wet locations



Example of unacceptable daisy-chaining of power strips.

Don't:

- plug in heavy appliances with high powered loads
- plug in RPTs into extension cords
- plug into other RPTs
- use outdoors or in construction sites
- violate other applicable standards

If you'd like additional information on RPTs, please visit the OSHA website at: www.osha.gov.

*By: John Grzywacz, Professor
OSHA National Training Institute*

NOAA Aviation Safety

NOAA SECO – Now A “PREVENT” Partner

By: Craig Gillis

NOAA SECO recently received their certificate from the Department of Transportation (DOT) as a participant in the Transportation Safety Institute's (TSI) “PREVENT” Program.

“NOAA SECO is commended for your participation in the TSI Partnership in Accident Prevention Emphasis and Training or PREVENT program. Your alliance with the United States Department of Transportation's Transportation Safety Institute demonstrates your commitment to proactive aviation accident prevention. Together we share the vision for a safer aviation community and better life for all citizens.”

We look forward to long and beneficial association with the DOT's Transportation Safety Institute

Cell Phones and Your Health

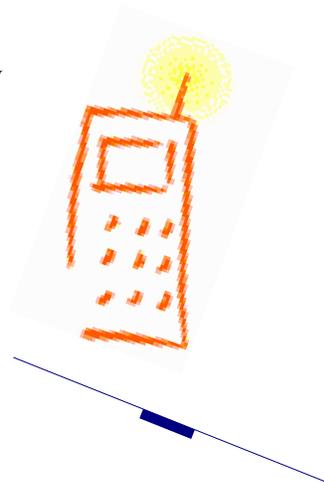
By: Rhonda Carpenter, CIH

Due to public concern, there are ongoing studies of the health effects of cell phones. The World Health Organization (WHO) has more information about ongoing studies of the effect of cell phones on the eyes, sleep, memory problems and headaches.

(<http://www.who.int/pch-emf/research/rf03/en/>)

One problem you may not be aware of is with cardiac pacemaker wearers. When a cell phone is placed close to a pacemaker it can interfere with the delivery of the pulses. If the phone is greater than 6 inches away from the pacemaker (such as in normal use), this does not occur.

Information on this issue can be found at <http://www.fda.gov/cellphones/>



COMING SOON TO A LOCATION NEAR YOU

DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSE

If you have an assigned vehicle or you drive a government vehicle on a frequent basis, you will soon be asked to attend a Defensive Driving Program. NOS is presently launching such a training program for all its personnel who frequently use a government vehicle. The NSC also offers on-line training lasting approximately 4 hours. In addition to this training, you need to have a valid driver's license from the state you reside. SECO is helping NOS in implementing this program and hopes this program will be offered NOAA wide shortly. These classes are designed to help you prevent those future preventable situations that we all face while driving your personal vehicles or a government owned vehicle.



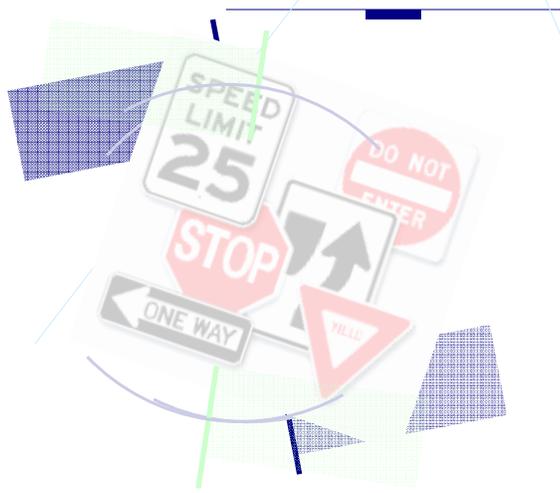
• *Accidents hurt -- safety doesn't.*

Cell Phone Drivers – Worse Than Drunks? (one study says Yes!)

A study at the University of Utah published in 2006 found that drivers on cell phones were as bad as drunk drivers. The study had 40 participants who each used a driving simulator to complete four tasks: normal driving, driving with a hand-held cell phone, driving with a hands-free cell phone and driving while intoxicated at the legal definition of intoxication – 0.08% blood-alcohol level. The findings showed that people were as impaired when they drove and talked on a cell phone as they were when they were intoxicated. <http://unews.utah.edu/p/?r=062206-1>



From the study, “Motorists who talked on either handheld or hands-free cell phones drove slightly slower, were 9 % slower to hit the brakes, displayed 24 % more variation in following distance, were 19% slower to resume normal speed after braking and were more likely to crash. Three study participants rear-ended the pace car. All were talking on cell phones. None were drunk.”



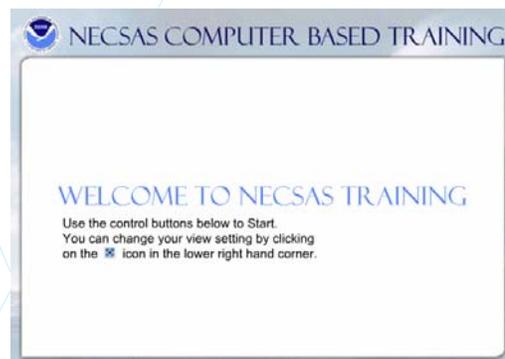
NECSAS COMPUTER BASED TRAINING (CBT)

As you know NOAA has an excellent Environmental Compliance and Safety Assessment System (NECSAS) program. NECSAS is a process designed to help NOAA staff not only identify environmental and safety compliance issues at our facilities, but to help us achieve compliance by tracking these issues to resolution. NECSAS provides the tools to allow facility staff such as Designated Responsible Officers, Facility Managers, Safety and/Environmental Focal Points, and Safety and Environmental Compliance Officers, line offices and regional and headquarters personnel to efficiently communicate issues in our environmental and safety programs and to work as an integrated team to resolve those issues.

NOAA has created a NECSAS Computer Based Training (CBT) course. The NECSAS CBT is a training course that will be offered on line at the NOAA NECSAS WHAM (Web-Hosted Assessment Manager) Website [<http://webhosted-am.com/NOAA/>] to any NOAA employee. It is expected to be up and running by the end of March 2007. The CBT will provide valuable information regarding the different types of assessments (Tier I and II), a detailed description of a Tier I assessment (pre-, post and site assessment information) and NOAA personnel responsibilities, an overview of WHAM, and how to respond to and close findings on-line, prepare reports, view findings photos, and much more.



So please mark your calendars for April 2007 and take a look at the new NECSAS CBT. We welcome any feedback and if you have any questions please feel free to contact Minh Trinh at 206-526-6647.



Never enter a noisy area without using hearing protection



ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of the Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO). The issues will be produced on a quarterly basis and posted on <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/> to help increase awareness of the environmental, safety and health programs. If you have any questions or comments, please contact SECO at (301)713-2870.