SECO Safety and Environmental Compliance Office

SEPTEMBER 2009
VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in Water

- **Loren Eiseley,** *The Immense Journey, 1957*

NEW DIRECTOR TAKES OVER SECO

OCAO is delighted to announce that effective August 31. 2009, James A. Norris will be joining, the Office of the Chief Administrative Office (OCAO) as the Director, Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO). Jim will be providing his leadership and expertise to ensure that NOAA has a safe and healthy work environment through the development, implementation, application and continuous improvement of NOAA's Safety and Environmental Compliance programs, policies and procedures.

Jim is a certified Safety Professional (CSP) and an industrial hygienist, who has over 18 years of experience in the environmental, health and safety field. Before accepting the position with the OCAO, he was employed as the North American Environmental, Health and Safety Manager for Grace Headquarters in Columbia, MD. He was responsible for the oversight of all environmental, health and safety issues for 33 facilities engaged in chemical manufacturing, construction product manufacturing and process and product research and development.

For 14 years, Jim worked at Millennium Chemicals at its headquarters and in various field locations. At Millennium Chemicals, he worked as a Global Process Safety and Security Manager, Superintendent, Safety Health, Environmental Health and Safety Manager and Industrial Hygienist. For 4 years, Jim also worked at the Shell Oil Company as a Safety and Health representative. Jim comes to us with a broad background of experience and leadership in safety and environmental compliance.

In addition to his extensive experience, Jim received his Bachelor's Degree (cum laude) in Safety Science from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1991 and a Master's degree in Industrial Hygiene from West Virginia University in 1995. His affiliations include the American Society of Safety Engineers, American Industrial Hygiene Association (professional member) and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (certified Safety Professional).

Please join us in congratulating Jim and welcoming him to the OCAO organization and leadership team.

NOW IS THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT COLD WEATHER

By: Craig Gillis

While most of us are still sweltering in the late summer or fall heat, it is never too early to be thinking about preparations to meet the oncoming cooler/colder weather. It is a lot easier and convenient to address equipment and facility issues now, than the first morning the temperature drops below freezing.

First item of business to take care of should be your residence and never too early to be thinking about some of the following:

* When was the last time you had your home's furnace, heat pump, or electric heating system checked? Scheduling a maintenance visit now will be cheaper than when the HVAC companies get busy.
* Changing furnace and heat pump filters will let equipment operate more efficiently and reduce your energy costs.
* If your heating plant is an older model, consider upgrading to a more modern energy-efficient system.
* If your heating method involves combustion, check all vents and exhaust systems. Consider installing carbon monoxide detectors in all home sleeping areas.
* Now is also the time to do any exterior maintenance on your home. Caulking and weather-stripping materials are cheap and can reduce your home energy costs.

If you have and use a wood stove or fireplace:

* When was the last time you had your chimney checked and cleaned?
* When was the last time you checked your wood stove for any cracks or signs of metal fatigue?
* When was the last time you had your fireplace checked for signs of mortar cracking and condition of the firebrick?

Consider your motor vehicles. In winter, we need our vehicles more than ever and they must be in good repair and operating condition. So consider the following:

* A good battery is necessary for cold weather operations. So how old is your vehicle's battery? While battery life all depends on such things as the ampere size of the battery, charging, and use, the "average battery life" is around five years. Not a hard and fast rule, but "the average." So if your vehicle's battery is around five or more years old, consider replacing the battery now. A lot easier to do now, than the first really cold morning when your vehicle will not start due to a dead battery.
* Many of us no longer use "snow tires," but "all-weather radials." Whether you still use the traditional "snow tires" or "all-weather radials," they must be in good condition. You can either check the condition of your tires yourself or have a tire store check them. If in doubt, replace your tires now.
* When was the last time the anti-freeze in your vehicle's radiator was checked, changed or the radiator flushed? Good anti-freeze is a necessity to cold weather vehicle operations. If you decide to change your vehicle's anti-freeze yourself, please remember to dispose of the old drained anti-freeze properly. DO NOT permit the old anti-freeze to drain onto your driveway and go into the storm sewer system.

There are several upcoming holidays where merchants have sales you can benefit from for goods and services you might need to prepare for winter. Check your local advertising.

Lastly, now is the time to be thinking about and preparing your vehicle's winter survival kit. Depending on what part of the country you live in or are traveling through, your vehicle should have at least:

* A small first aid kit.
* A blanket and water-proof jacket for each occupant.
* Personal care products and any Rx medications.
* A good flashlight and spare batteries.
* Energy bars and extra water.
* Emergency flares.
* If in an area where snow and ice occur, a small shovel and container of sand or "kitty litter."
* Battery jumper cables.

Winter preparation now, when the temperatures are still comfortable, makes life down the road in colder weather a lot more bearable.

September is National Preparedness Month

At home or at work, routines can be disrupted with little or no warning by natural disasters, fires or other catastrophic events. Do not wait for an emergency to think about people with disabilities both at home and work.

Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs

For People with Disabilities:

- Create a support network both at home and work to assist in an emergency.
- Tell your co-workers, family, friends and neighbors where you keep your emergency supplies, both at work and home.
- Give one member of your home support network a key to your house or apartment.
- Contact your city or county government's emergency information management office. Many local offices keep rosters of people with disabilities so they can be located quickly in a sudden emergency.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to help identify your disability.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment, know the location, and availability of more than one facility, in your city, county, and state.
- Show others how to operate your wheelchair.
- Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, mark your wheelchair with your name address, and phone number in case it has to be transported.
- **Encourage electronic payments for federal benefit recipients.** Keep in mind a disaster can disrupt mail service for days or even weeks. For those who depend on the mail for their Social Security benefits, a difficult situation can become worse if they are evacuated or lose their mail service – as 85,000 check recipients learned after Hurricane Katrina. Switching to electronic payments is one simple, significant way people can protect themselves financially before disaster strikes. It also eliminates the risk of stolen checks.

  The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:

  - Direct deposit to a checking or savings account is the best option for people with bank accounts. Federal benefit recipients can sign up by calling (800) 333-1795 or at www.GoDirect.org.
  - The **Direct Express®** prepaid debit card is designed as a safe and easy alternative to paper checks for people who do not have a bank account. Sign up is easy – call toll-free at (877) 212-9991 or sign up online at www.USDirectExpress.com.

Signing up for direct deposit or the **Direct Express** card is a simple but important step that can help protect your family's access to funds in case the unthinkable were to happen. If you or those close to you are still receiving Social Security or other federal benefits by check, please consider switching to one of these safer, easier options today.

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- *Additional Supplies for People with Disabilities:*
  - Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, list of any allergies.
  - Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries.
  - Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen.
  - Keep a list of the style and serial number of medical devices.
  - Medical insurance and Medicare cards.
  - List of doctors, relatives or friends who should be notified if you are hurt.

More Information

For information and tools related to emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities see the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities' Resource Center, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and/or your state or local Emergency Manager Agency.

Keep in mind a disaster can disrupt your normal activities at anytime ***so be prepared for the emergency in your future for both home, and at work***.

Safety Depends on You

DON'T "TRIP 'N FALL" IN THE FALL

By: Craig Gillis

Ah the Fall! That special time of year for most of the country when the weather starts to cool off into clear days and cool nights, with the chance of the first hints of wood smoke in the air. The time of year also when "Mother Nature" displays her talents in creating a broad spectrum of brilliant and beautiful colors of tree leaves. Of course, as quickly as the leaves turn colors, they start to fall off the trees and this creates a potential safety problem.

Leaf clutter presents many safety hazards. If you like to walk outdoors, leaf clutter can cover over rocks, logs, holes, etc., creating all varieties of tripping and falling hazards. In addition, many times people are so intent on observing the foliage; they forget the ground hazards presented by fallen leaf clutter.

Along with beautiful fall weather, there are also fall windstorms, late tropical storms and in some cases, late season hurricanes. Wet blowing leaves present not only a "leaf covering" problem, but wet leaves also present a very real slipping hazard.

Wet blowing leaves not only present a slipping and tripping hazard, but a driving hazard as well. Wet leaves on road surfaces make the road surfaces very slippery and increases vehicle-stopping distances. When the leaves start to fall and blow, especially on roads, you need to increase your situational awareness for both walking and vehicle operations.

While not a "trip 'n fall" hazard, with leaves on the ground, you do not want to park your vehicle atop a leaf pile. Even with the engine off, vehicle catalytic converters can still be at temperatures that can ignite such materials as leaves and destroy your vehicle.

Enjoy the fall foliage and leaf colors, but always maintain your situational awareness to the potential hazards they can cause. And always wear the proper footwear when walking outside.

"If you think you are leading and no one is following, maybe you are just out for a walk."

Anonymous

Look what's new ...

Have you visited the NOAA Commerce Learning Center lately? NOAA is delighted to provide a wide range of safety training courses offered to all employees and contractors. These courses are provided by Skill Soft, are free of charge, and take approximately 2 hours to complete. A full list of all course titles is listed below:

* Back Safety
* Electrostatic Discharge Safety Training
* Machine Guarding Safety
* Decontamination (HAZWOPER)
* Defensive Driving: Truck Safety
* Behavior-based Safety
* Fire Prevention and Safety
* Material Safety Data Sheets
* Emergency Response and Spill Control
* Laser Safety Training
* Carcinogen Safety
* Food Safety and Handling
* NFPA70E Electrical Safety in the Workplace
* Hazard Communication
* Trenching and Excavation Safety
* Chemical Process Safety
* Forklift Safety
* Office Safety
* Heat and Cold Exposure Management
* Electrical Safety Awareness
* Chlorine Safety Ladder Safety
* Toxicology (HAZWOPER)
* PPE/Respiratory Protection
* Site Control (HAZWOPER)
* Compressed Gas Safety
* Laboratory Safety
* Radiation Safety
* Regulatory Overview (HAZWOPER)
* Workplace Safety Orientation
* Construction Safety Orientation
* Ladder and Scaffolding Safety
* Site Safety and Health Plan Procedures
* Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Safety
* Cryogenic Safety
* Recognizing Safety Procedures, Effective Communication, and Professional Behavior

If you are interested in taking an online training course, you can access any of these titles by using the SEARCH key located on the https://doc.learn.com/noaa home

Federal Worker Safety is Focus of Nationwide Inspection Program

OSHA is continuing its nationwide program to emphasize workplace safety and health for federal workers and contractors whose work is overseen by federal staff. The Federal Agency Targeting Inspection Program directive, developed in 2008, provides the procedures OSHA field staff must follow when conducting safety inspections at some of the most hazardous federal worksites. For more information, please refer to the OSHA Directive linked below:
http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive_pdf/FAP01_09-04.pdf

Small Boat Training

ORR Safety Brief #16 , June 1, 2009

Small boats (NOAA defines small boats as vessels shorter than 65 feet) are used by NOAA OR&R for a variety of purposes, and OR&R staff usually rides small boats as passengers. NOAA requires that small boat operators and crew members receive training to prepare them to handle the boats, but there are no training requirements for small boat passengers. Recognizing the advantages that small boat training offers (safety and otherwise) OR&R provided a number of small boat training sessions to its staff, most recently a Boating Skills and Seamanship (BSS) course, instructed in Seattle by USCG Auxiliary.

Small boat safety training is widely available, inexpensive, and could be a critical life saver. If you use small boats at work, it is highly recommended that you take one of the classes below, or an equivalent training:

- *USCG Boating Skills and Seamanship*. A three-day class, provides numerous basics skills in addition to safety http://nws.cgaux.org/visitors/pe_visitor/classes/boating_skills_and_seamanship.html
- *About Boating Safely*. A one-day class, provides the essentials http://www.cgaux.org/boatinged/classes/about_boating_safely_seminar.html
- Class finder for boating safety classes http://www.cgaux.org/publiced/class_finder/index.html
- NOAA Small Boat Operator Training http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/resources/training.html

For General Reference:

- NOAA Small Boat Web Page http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/
- NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations http://www.omao.noaa.gov/
- USCG Auxiliary Home Page http://www.cgaux.org/

Examples of small boats: NMFS R/V *Coho (top)* and NOS R/V *Bay Hydro II*. Source: http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/

Kitchen Fires

ORR Safety Brief #15, May 26 ,2009

Cooking is the #1 source of home fires in the US. Check out the video and resources below for great tips on how to prevent and deal with kitchen fires. In essence:

- Watch what you heat – Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.
- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled. For an oven fire turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- Never use water on grease fires!
- Make sure everyone leaves the house, and call 911! If you try to fight the fire, be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.

Additional Resources:

- USFA Video http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/research/other/cooking/index5.shtm
- NFPA Cooking Fires http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=282&URL=Research%20&%20Reports/Fact%20sheets/Cooking
- NFPA Cooking Safety Tip http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1695&itemID=41075&URL=Safety%20Information/For%20consumers/Cooking/Cooking%20safety%20tips
- Hanford FD http://www.hanford.gov/fire/safety/kitchen.htm

Cooking fire. Source: http://www.fireflash.org/Resources/cooker2.jpeg

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.