

August 8, 2008

Attendees: Jack Staub, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Kim Thorsted, Terrie Wierenga

Welcome to another Location Safety Committee e-meeting. I trust your summer research programs have gone well. I've got just a few things to touch on this time.

- Bulletin 08-245, Tracking Controlled Substances, was released in February of this year. It requires certain chemicals to be purchased only by an authorized cardholder. The DEA has identified several chemicals used in making methamphetamine and requires that these be tracked. It involves the purchaser having to fill out a letter of compliance, stating the individual is authorized by ARS to purchase these chemicals. One chemical that appears on the list is iodine and its compounds; currently, that's the one being targeted. If anyone purchases iodine or one of its compounds, they'll be contacted by the vendor and asked to fill out the compliance letter. In ARS, only cardholders that have been warranted are to purchase these chemicals. Most scientists or secretaries holding purchase cards are not authorized to purchase controlled substances.
- The NPA Safety Sharepoint site contains many resources from department directives to sample plans and protocols. Ellen, Kim, and I all have access to this site. In addition, the monthly safety teleconferences can also be a good way to learn about upcoming training opportunities, survey requests, inspections/audits, and a variety of topics (heat stress, the aging workforce, cold stress, etc.). The teleconferences are held the second Wednesday of each month from 1:00-2:30 pm.
- A reminder to make sure you include EMS training to new employees and as refresher training. Glen Trostle is our EMS coordinator.
- Would there be interest in having a wilderness first aid course taught? For PPRL, we have quite a few employees out for a day or extended periods of time who are quite a ways from a clinic or hospital. Several employees have expressed interest in this.
- Thanks for your help in getting the chemical inventories in to me to compile each quarter per Boyd Rutherford's request. Our next report will be due in October for the third quarter period (July – September).

April 9, 2008

Attendees: Jack Staub, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Kim Thorsted, Terrie Wierenga

Just a few things to hit for our bimonthly e-meeting. Ellen & I attended the NPA Safety, Industrial Hygiene & EMS conference in Ft. Collins in early March. There was a lot of good discussion and networking that came out of it. Once again, I was reminded how differently each location (and even each management unit) handles their safety concerns. I strongly encourage FRRL safety folks to participate in the monthly safety teleconferences; Ellen, Glen and I have participated regularly over the years and gained much from them. Much information is exchanged then plus there's a tremendous amount of links on the Sharepoint site to help you with about any topic you want. Teleconferences are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 pm (there's one today, in fact).

The ARMPS process is gearing up. Now would be a good time to do a facility safety inspection (or review the one done last year) to identify any large-ticket items that you found that need correcting. These can be put in the budget for FY 2009 by your unit's leadership.

AgLearn now offers a wealth of safety training. A couple of courses I strongly suggest for anyone with additional safety responsibilities are OSHA 600 as well as the ARS SHEMB video "So You want to be a CDSO" (this last one is available online). Check out the Aglearn course directory for the full catalog of safety related training and create your own training program.

Thanks for everyone helping with the Rutherford chemical inventory report. This is due every three months; the next one will be in June (probably around the 25th so I can get it compiled, signed, and sent in by July 3).

One item to note is that CPR recommendation has been changed. Studies have shown that it's more critical to keep the heart pumping blood than it is to keep respiration going. In my last CERT class, we were taught to give 30 chest compressions to each breath when administering first aid. If there's interest among the units, perhaps we could schedule some CPR training on a location basis.

Hopefully, you've all had a chance to present refresher (or initial) training for field work safety before your co-workers have scattered out across the countryside. The Harvard safety site (hazard.com) has an archive of Powerpoint and Adobe-based training modules that can be easily adapted to your needs.

November 15, 2007

Attendees: Jack Staub, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Kim Thorsted, Terrie Wierenga

The DHS has finally published their list of Chemicals of Interest (also known as Appendix A). These are substances identified by DHS that could be used in a terrorism incident. We are required to review this list and compare it to our chemical inventory. If we have chemicals that meet the threshold requirements on Appendix A, we are then required to complete a security screening form called TOPScreen by January 2, 2008. At that point, the DHS will determine what level of risk our facility should be assigned, at which time various reporting requirements will kick in.

I've attached the PDF of Appendix A. I went through the list and compared it to PPRL's inventory; we have about 15 chemicals. However, all are below the threshold to trigger reporting. I strongly encourage you to do this comparison ASAP. One thing to be aware of is one of thresholds is labeled "APA" which means "A Placarded Amount." There's some question as to which placarding agency is referenced; for now, the NPA is generally going with the DOT limits. I plan to check the IATA limits as well since in past multi-jurisdictional limit disputes, we've been told to go with whomever's is strictest.

We need to each go through our respective unit's chemical inventory and compile the list of chemicals we have that also appear on Appendix A. Then we need to meet and determine if the quantities trigger the reporting requirements. While in the past we've pretty much operated as three separate entities, for this (and for the Rutherford memo; more later) we need to report as one. Perhaps sometime during the second week of December (say the 10th or 11th) we can meet to combine our inventories.

Now for the Rutherford Memo...

In response to an OIG audit from 2004-2005, Mr. Boyd Rutherford, USDA assistant secretary for administration, has issued a memo requiring quarterly submissions of hazardous chemical inventories. He also redefined a hazardous chemical as anything with the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment. This pretty much includes everything we store or use, including distilled water. We are trying to negotiate a more reasonable definition, one based on science, but in the meantime the reporting requirement must be met. As an aside, the OIG did audit PPRL and FRRL for this; we came through with a "no findings against" statement, which means we met and exceeded the reporting requirements. But anyway...

The Area safety personnel have been tasked with collecting these reports and submitting them up the line to Mr. Rutherford. What I propose is that as we review the inventories for the DHS report, we also make an electronic copy of our entire inventory that I can combine and send to Bonnie King. I use Excel for PPRL, and I think Ellen uses it also. Lin or Carolyn, can your database be exported to Excel or to a text delimited file format? When we meet for the DHS review, we can also combine our inventories.

This is a lot to be hit with, especially this time of year when many folks are out of the office for holidays. Where we've been doing annual physical inventories of our chemicals plus already have the information in them that is required, we should be in pretty good shape.

October 30, 2007

Attendees: Jack Staub, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Kim Thorsted, Terrie Wierenga

It's time to touch base again on safety items, concerns, etc. If you aren't already, I strongly encourage you to participate in the monthly safety teleconferences for the NPA. They're held on the second Wednesday of each month from 1:00 - 2:30 pm. A variety of topics are covered that apply to our location in various degrees. The NPA Safety Sharepoint site is also a great resource.

Keep in mind that there are several things required on an annual basis. Among them are:

- review of all written programs and plans; make sure you sign and date the review (if no changes were necessary) and have your RL also sign off
- a physical inventory of all chemicals must be done at least annually. You also need to note in your files whether or not you had chemicals in quantities high enough to require a report to be filed with the local emergency responders (in our case, the Logan Fire Dept). This is under the Community Right-to-Know legislation.
- make sure all the required training has occurred. Not only do you need to provide initial training on the various safety plans, but most require annual refresher training. If your unit has a regular staff meeting, an easy way to accomplish this is to present it on one topic each month. I've also developed several powerpoint shows that employees can go through on their own and then take a test (which I keep on file) to show they've understood the training.
- USU EH&S has their online database of emergency information that we are asked to keep current. This is based on ArcGIS and allows each room in each building to be identified as to what hazards are present, if any. This needs updated on an annual basis as well.
- review the MSDS databases or paper records you have to make sure they're relevant and recent, i.e. within the last 5 years. This is especially important if you've hired several new scientists or have begun research in new fields (both of which apply to us at PPRL).

I'm participating in the monthly ARS biosafety teleconferences, too, since I'm the location biosafety officer (BSO). Several items being discussed will impact us down the road if they are implemented. One major one involves the biological inventory for each unit. We will be required to purchase a software program specified by Joe Kozlovac, the ARS biosafety officer, and keep our records there. Since each of our units is in a separate building, that will most likely entail purchasing 3 programs. Right now, that'll cost each unit around \$20,000 for the software and hardware (including putting in new data lines and possible remodeling of the biological labs to accommodate the work stations). I've been advocating (quite loudly) that since none of us are using select agents, we don't need this level of compliance. Thus far, though, I'm not making much headway. Several other location biosafety officers are also trying to convince Joe and others that if our current inventory software meets the recordkeeping requirements and we use only BSL-II or lower agents, we should be exempt from this requirement. For PPRL, \$20,000 is easily a couple of field research projects. Maintenance of the proposed software database will be around \$5,000 each year thereafter.

I haven't heard much lately on radiological safety. We're all under the USU state license for using X-rays, soil gauges, and unsealed source material. The USDA Radiation Safety Office was proposing at one time that locations should still be required to have an LRPO (location radiation protection officer) permit with USDA regardless of where the working permit was held. They also proposed charging each location \$3,000 for administering this, even though they wouldn't be receiving any reports from those of us under state permits. That was 8 months ago, though, and I've heard nothing since then.

And finally, the NPA will be holding a safety workshop next March 10-14 for everyone with added safety responsibilities. I strongly urge you now to plan to attend this. It'll provide some hands-on training on inspection techniques as well as a number of other topics.

June 25, 2007

Attendees: John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Ron Reed, Terrie Wierenga

It's time for another email meeting of the location safety committee. I think the safety programs are going well at all the research units, so this will be basically a reminder of things that need to be done. Later this year (perhaps August or September) we can get together for a real meeting.

INSPECTIONS: We are required to do an annual inspection/safety audit. Those of you attending the monthly safety teleconference know that there are a number of digitized audits covering a variety of workspaces--greenhouses, biological labs, chemical storage, etc. Keep in mind that these contain basic questions that are similar for every lab of this type. Your workspaces may contain more, so make sure you include those in your inspections. There is a push to (once again) make everyone use the same checklist, regardless of how complete or appropriate it is. However, if you focus exclusively on answering the questions, you tend to not be aware of the things outside that list. That's one reason I strongly encourage that these annual inspections be done by at least 2 people. We're each conditioned to notice certain things that others may not.

HEAT: If you haven't already, you may want to distribute information to your coworkers about heat stroke and heat stress--how to avoid them, how to recognize them, how to treat them. Especially for folks out in the field (collecting plants, conducting off-site research), where they may be far from immediate medical support, make sure they carry plenty of potable water, sunscreen, and are dressed appropriately. If you need more information, let me know and I'll send you the links.

DISEASE, INSECTS, ETC.: The latest reports from CDC are showing an increase in hantavirus and tularemia cases. Researchers in New Mexico have seen quite an increase in the deer mouse population. When you or your coworkers bring back the plant samples you've collected, make sure you take the proper precautions for storage. Keep the samples in a rodent-free area; have some type of rodent control in place (poison, traps), and know what the signs of a hantavirus infection are. USU EH&S has some good guidelines on entering and cleaning up areas that have been infested by rodents. And our field research folks are seeing lots more ticks this year. In addition to carrying the bacterium for Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a number are also carriers for tularemia (rabbit fever). And of course, there's always West Nile Virus and encephalitis carried by mosquitoes. Make sure your folks not only wear sunscreen in the field but also insect repellants.

2008 NPA SAFETY WORKSHOP: Plans are underway for a safety workshop open to all NPA safety committees. It'll be held March 10-14, 2008, probably in Ft. Collins. These can be a great learning resource, providing lots of hands-on experience in many areas.

August 18, 2006

Attendees: Jerry Chatterton, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Ron Reed, Terrie Wierenga

I trust everyone's summer has gone safely. At the PPRL we had more people out on field trips and sites than we've ever had. With our new staff getting their research programs going, we've also seen many more miles driven. As a result, we have been made aware of the importance of vehicle safety--preventive maintenance, safety checks before leaving the lab or field site, and defensive driving techniques. All vehicles, and especially those that travel outside the valley, should have a basic first aid kit, roadside emergency equipment (flares, reflective triangles, flashlight, jack, tow rope/chain), and a fire extinguisher.

The monthly NPA Safety Teleconferences continue to be held. The information discussed can be found on the SharePoint website. Ellen and I participate most of the time although our research duties sometime prevent us from dialing in. The minutes of past meetings are also posted on the website as well as any links or documents discussed. This is a valuable resource; several folks share their training plans and powerpoint shows. I strongly encourage everyone to participate. The teleconference is held the second Wednesday of each month, and it's now a toll-free number to call in.

In addition, the NPA EMS (Environmental Management Systems) Team also holds monthly meetings. Glen is our team leader for this; the team is currently comprised of members of the location safety team. Until this changes, we'll plan to hold meetings for both programs together to cut down on interruptions to our real mission: research. Part of the requirements for the EMS is to conduct an annual audit that looks at policy, objectives, emergency preparedness, and management overview. The proposed audit for calendar year 2006 is found on the Sharepoint site. Glen prepared the location EMS plan; all of you should have a copy of that for your facility. There was also a request last winter for an inventory of all computers and especially monitors in use at each facility. Frankly, I don't have the time to devote to gathering the extremely minute information requested. So, today I did a walk-through of our facility and recorded the basics--room number; monitor make, model (if easily seen), type (CRT or LCD), and size; operating platform (we still have some using DOS or Win 3.1!); and approximate date purchased.

The potential effects of a pandemic flu have garnered much media attention. ARS has developed guidelines for planning on how to deal with such an emergency and a contact person at each location has been selected. For Logan, Dr. Bryan Stegelemeir, veterinary pathologist at PPRL, is our pandemic flu response coordinator. He will be tailoring the basic response plan from ARS to our location and may be requesting your assistance on this project.

Reminders for the year:

1. All written programs need to be reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually. Be sure to record the information of who reviewed it and when.
2. Refresher training for both hazardous communication and chemical hygiene/lab safety plans needs to be done annually. As well, AgLearn has a number of safety-related training modules (free of charge) that you can take online for personal development. The last I checked, Smart Center also had some safety items available for checkout but most dated from the late 1980's to the early 90's.
3. DOT training for the nuclear gauge users needs to be done every 3 years.
4. Dangerous goods shippers also need to be trained every 2 years or whenever the regulations change. This would include shipments containing strong acids or bases, infectious or toxic substances, or biological tissues and fluids. New DOT regulations on shipping animal parts go into effect this October. If your facility ships anything considered hazardous by DOT or IATA, you must have someone certified to pack and label it properly. Three of us at PPRL have been trained.

Please evaluate your shipments to decide if this training is required for your facilities.

5. General safety inspections/audits also need to be done each fiscal year, preferably before ARMPS (back in May) in order to help budget any large-ticket safety needs.

6. Annual certifications are required for fume hoods and fire extinguishers. Also, eyewashes should be flushed at least weekly and safety showers flushed at least monthly. Flow rates, temperatures, and pressures also need to be checked annually.

May 9, 2006

Attendees: Jerry Chatterton, John Watterson, Ellen Klinger, Craig Rigby, Lin Johnson, Ron Reed, Terrie Wierenga

One item that was missed/overlooked in the OMSP exams was the respirator clearance card for people. Each employee required to wear a respirator must have one of these cards (it's good for a year) plus receive training and fit testing each year. I contacted CVSH and have cards for everyone who participated in the program (some got them even though they don't wear a respirator). I've sent the cards for the Bee Lab to you, Ellen, and for FRRL to you, Lin, for distribution.

Rachel Curry of USU EH&S provides initial and refresher training (it takes about an hour) plus does the fit testing for each user. Her phone number is 797-7423 if you'd like to contact her to arrange for training and testing. PPRL will be doing our training & testing Thursday, May 18.

Just a reminder--the monthly NPA safety teleconference will be held tomorrow at 1:00 pm; information is available on the Sharepoint site.

July 22, 2005

The Logan ARS Location Safety Committee met July 22 via e-conference. Members receiving notification were Terrie Wierenga, chair; Jerry Chatterton, John Watterson, Lin Johnson, Craig Rigby, Ron Reed and Glen Trostle.

As a general comment, there are more injuries and accidents occurring this year than we've seen in the past. There doesn't seem to be any common thread among them. Most are cuts due to harvesting plants; employees have also suffered a twisted back and twisted ankle. There was one chemical accident that required a trip to the emergency room. A waste bottle with about 100 mL nitric acid exploded in a hood; an employee received one cut that required stitches and was kept for observation for 3 hours to ensure no effects from the cloud of nitric acid. He recovered quickly and suffered no effects other than the stitches pulling when he turned. The accident was investigated and it was determined that faulty humidity controls allowed condensation to build up in the bottle (we found several similar bottles with water droplets in them). When the waste nitric acid was poured in and the bottle capped, pressure built up from the chemical reaction and caused the bottle to explode. A "blast shield" will be purchased before this procedure is started again this winter to provide more protection. The hood window was cracked but did not shatter.

The NPA EMS Team continues to hold monthly teleconferences. Locations need to have EMS plans in place by December 31st. Draft plans and policy statements have been developed and are available on the Sharepoint Safety Team site. If you are unfamiliar with this site, please contact me so we can get you set up to access it. The site contains much information that can be used to help us in our roles as Collateral Duty Safety Officers.

The baseline Industrial Hygiene surveys were due to Bonnie King June 30. I trust that all have been sent to her by now. I've done some basic monitoring at PPRL just to confirm that exposures hadn't changed due to us being in the new facility; thus far, our employees are not exposed to concentrations even near the action level. New labs are nice!

The USU EH&S office is updating the emergency response notebooks. Now would be a good time for you to review and update your copies and provide the changes to EH&S.

December 2, 2004

Firstly, I'd like to welcome Ron Reed (FRRL) to the Location Safety Committee. I'll be in touch with him later to get some of the initial training started.

Items for discussion are the normal ones for this time of year.

- It's time to review your chemical inventories and determine if you have any quantities that may require reporting under the Community Right-to-Know Act.
- Written plans need to be reviewed annually and updated if needed. Remember to initial and date when the review occurred.

The Industrial Hygiene Baseline Surveys still need to be done. I'll be doing new surveys of our facility next month since we'll be in our new building by then and the old surveys are obsolete. The deadline for submitting these to Bonnie is June 30, 2005. At this time, she isn't planning on coming to our location since our safety programs are generally excellent (way to go, group!).

Glen is our local member of the NPA Environmental Management Systems Team. Monthly teleconferences are being held (the second Wednesday at 1:45 pm) if you're interested in sitting in on them. We are expected to have EMS plans implemented (not just written) by Dec. 31, 2005. I'd like for us to get both the IH surveys and EMS plans in place by June 2005.

Please send me copies of your safety inspections done this year for the location records.

I'd like to hold a "real" meeting in January and have EMS as the main topic. Please let me know if you'd be able to meet sometime during the third or fourth weeks of January.