



# Logan Location Safety Notes



June 1994

## Training Opportunities

**Respirator Training:** Wed., June 8, noon, in the FRRL Conference Room. Nancy Fox from USU Environmental Health & Safety Office will conduct the training. Anyone who wears a respirator or uses a dust mask must attend this training if you haven't done so in the past year. Supervisors are also encouraged to attend. If you wear a cartridge-style respirator or SCBA, you must also have a pulmonary function test and pass a fit test on a yearly basis.

**OSHA's Voluntary Compliance Safety & Health Course:** Safety Consulting & Training, Inc., are offering a two-day course in Denver, CO, June 27-28. Topics to be covered are: Introduction to OSHA, Walking-Working Surfaces, Means of Egress, Hazardous Materials, Personal Protective Equipment, General Environmental Controls, Fire Protection, Materials Handling and Storage, Machinery and Machine Guarding, Welding, Cutting and Brazing, Electrical, NFPA 704, Hazard Communication, Housekeeping and General Safety and Health Provisions, and Bloodborne Pathogens. Cost is \$450. For more information, contact Terrie at 752-2941.



## Hantavirus Infection Risk Reduction

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recently published a list of recommendations for reducing the risk of hantavirus infection<sup>1</sup>. In the southwestern United States, deer mice are the primary reservoir for the hantavirus. Piñon mice, brush mice, western chipmunks<sup>1</sup>, house mice, harvest mice, cliff chipmunks, rock squirrels, and white-throated wood rats<sup>2</sup> have also been identified as hosts. Infected rodents shed the virus in saliva, urine, and feces. Human infection occurs when infective saliva or excreta are inhaled as aerosols. Infections have been associated with these activities:

- ◆ planting or harvesting crops
- ◆ occupying previously vacant cabins or other dwellings
- ◆ cleaning barns and other outbuildings
- ◆ disturbing rodent-infested areas while hiking or camping
- ◆ inhabiting dwellings with indoor rodent populations
- ◆ residing in or visiting areas where the rodent population has shown an increase in density<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, these rodents also act as hosts for the plague bacterium *Yersina pestis*. If the rodents are controlled without concurrent control of the fleas, the risk of

human plague increases as the fleas seek an alternative food source. Since eradication of the mice is not feasible or desirable, the best approach for disease control and risk reduction at this time is through hygiene practices that deter rodents from colonizing the home and work environment.

The CDC report lists several precautions for people to take when working or traveling in rodent-infested areas or when cleaning such areas. Although no documented hantavirus infections have occurred in Utah<sup>3</sup>, the states surrounding us (except for Wyoming) have reported a number of cases. Several research projects require workers to collect plant samples or perform grazing studies in the southwestern states, where infection incidence is highest. The following precautions are those recommended by the CDC<sup>1</sup> for campers and hikers in the affected areas.

- ★ Avoid coming into contact with rodents and rodent burrows or disturbing dens (such as pack rat nests).
- ★ Do not use cabins or other enclosed shelters that are rodent infested until they have been appropriately cleaned and disinfected.
- ★ Do not pitch tents or place sleeping bags in areas in proximity to rodent feces or burrows or near possible rodent shelters (e.g., garbage dumps or woodpiles).
- ★ If possible, do not sleep on the bare ground. Use a cot with the sleeping surface at least 12 inches above the ground. Use tents with floors.
- ★ Keep food in rodent-proof containers.
- ★ Promptly bury (or—preferably—burn followed by burying, when in accordance with local requirements) all garbage and trash, or discard in covered trash containers.
- ★ Use only bottled water or water that has been disinfected by filtration,

boiling, chlorination or iodination.

If you are cleaning up an area with evidence of rodent activity (e.g. dead mice, rodent excreta), use procedures that limit the potential for raising dust or dirt from potentially contaminated surfaces. The CDC has issued guidelines for such clean-up<sup>1</sup>.

- ▶ Wear rubber or plastic gloves.
- ▶ Spray dead rodents, rodent nests, droppings, or other tainted items with a general-purpose household disinfectant (3 tablespoons bleach in 1 gallon water). Soak the material thoroughly and place in a plastic bag. When clean-up is complete, seal the bag, then place it into a second plastic bag and seal. Dispose of the bagged material by burying in a 2- to 3-foot-deep hole or by burning. If these alternatives are not feasible, contact the local or state health department for instructions.
- ▶ When clean-up is complete, mop floors with a solution of water, detergent, and disinfectant. A second mopping or spraying of floors with a general-purpose disinfectant is optional. Do not vacuum or sweep dry surface before mopping.
- ▶ Rugs and upholstered furniture should be steam cleaned or shampooed. If the nests are not accessible for decontamination, remove the furniture and burn it.
- ▶ Launder potentially contaminated bedding and clothing with hot water and detergent; dry on high setting or air dry in the sun.

1. CDC. MMWR 1993; 42(RR-11):1-19.
2. Stone, R. Science 1993; Vol. 262:833.
3. CDC. MMWR 1994; 43(3):45-48.



Questions?? Comments?? Contact Terrie Wierenga,  
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