Seasonal Flu Update

If you have watched the news recently, you may have heard reports from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) stating that the flu shot is less effective this year. The CDC stated that the virus has mutated in an advisory to doctors. The CDC is still encouraging people to get a flu shot as it will prevent millions of cases of the flu, just like it does every year.

The flu season does not peak until January or February and the CDC reports that approximately 111 million work days are lost each year to seasonal influenza.

It is important to keep yourself healthy during the flu season. A high concentration of germs can be found:
- In the break room
- On microwave handles
- On Keyboards
- On refrigerator handles
- On water fountain buttons
- On vending machine buttons.

Keep your office space clean during this season and wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Cover your cough—if a tissue is not available, use your upper arm instead.

If you are sick, stay home to prevent spreading germs to co-workers. Drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest.

If symptoms returned, seek medical attention. You should also seek medical attention if you have a high fever that does not respond to over-the-counter fever reducers or if you experience signs of dehydration.

Keep yourself and your family healthy this flu season by following these important tips.

Proper Hand-Washing

The CDC recommends frequent hand washing as a simple way to avoid flu germs, but are you doing this correctly? Here is a quick refresher.

Wet your hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap and apply soap.

Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end, twice.

Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.

Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Special points of interest:
- National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 7-13, 2014
- Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after getting sick.
- Hand washing is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness to others.
Working in the Cold

There are many positions that require workers to be outside, even on the coldest of North Dakota winter days. If you have one of these positions it is important to keep yourself and your co-workers safe. Look for danger signs including uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue and confused behavior. If you observe any of these signs in yourself or a co-worker, seek help immediately. OSHA provides the following tips to protect workers in cold environments.

- Learn the signs/symptoms of cold-induced illnesses and injuries and what to do to help workers.
- Wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions, including layers that can be adjusted.
- Take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters to allow your body to warm up.
- Try to schedule work for the warmest part of the day.
- Use the buddy system—work together.
- Drink warm, sweet beverages—avoid caffeine or alcohol.
- Eat warm, high-calorie foods.
- Remember, you face increased risks when you take certain medications, are in poor physical condition or suffer from illnesses.

Seasonal Safety Reminder

With the mild temperatures we have been experiencing, the Safety Office wants to remind all employees to be extra cautious when walking outdoors. Melting and freezing can create icy paths. Please give yourself extra time to get where you need to go. Many incidents occur when we are in a hurry or running late. Wear proper footwear, take smaller steps, and stay aware of your surroundings. It is important that we all stay extra cautious during this time of the year.

If you do come across areas that are particularly icy, fill out a Near Miss report and/or contact the proper department to make them aware of the situation. Remember to be proactive and report those areas that pose a potential slip and fall hazard. It is up to each one of us to keep our employees safe.

Holiday Light Safety

Lights are the most popular way to decorate our homes and offices for the holidays. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends the following:

- Choose lights that are tested and UL listed.
- Check all cords for cracks or breaks and replace burned out bulbs promptly.
- Use no more than 3 standard sets of lights together.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- Fasten lights through hooks or insulated connectors, not nails or tacks.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Never pull on cords.
- Stay away from power or feeder lines around older home.
How to Choose Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Facial and Respiratory Protection

When determining what type of facial protection and/or respiratory PPE you need, perform a risk assessment to determine:

- what are the risks I need protection from?
- Do I require protection from potential splashes, sprays, or droplets?
- Do I require inhalation protection from aerosols?
- Do I also need to protect the skin on my face from splashes or sprays (not just my mucous membranes and/or airway)?
- Don’t forget your eyes! Your eyes represent another source of potential mucous membrane exposure.

Surgical masks and respirators sometimes look very similar; however, they do not provide the same protection. Surgical masks, or face masks, will provide mucous membrane protection from splashes, sprays, and large droplets to the nose and mouth of the wearer. They will also prevent the wearer from depositing the same into their work environment. However, they do not provide protection to the wearer from the inhalation of aerosols. (You can learn more about aerosols here: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/aerosols/).

If your risk assessment dictates that you require protection from aerosols, then you must wear a respirator for protection. One of the most common respirators used in the lab is an N-95 disposable respirator. The "95" refers to its filtering efficiency. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is the agency responsible for testing and certifying respirators. Please look for this certification when choosing a respirator – only NIOSH certified respirators should be worn. Respirators need to fit snugly to the face and create a seal so that inhaled air is drawn in through the filter and not through leaks between the filter and the face for the respirator to work properly. Because this is critical to the function of the respirator, all respirator wearers require a medical evaluation and fit testing prior to using one. You can contact the Safety Office to learn more about the respiratory protection program. There are several types of respirators other than the N-95 disposable type you may be most familiar with. Based on your need, you may require additional/different air filtering. You can learn about other respirators here: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nptl/respirers.html.

Please contact the Safety Office if you have questions selecting the appropriate respirator. If you also need to protect the skin on your face from contaminated/potentially contaminated liquids during your laboratory procedures, you need to wear a face shield. These cover the forehead, extend down to the chin or lower, and wrap around the sides of the face. Face masks or N-95s can/should be worn under the face shield as necessary.

Eye protection such as glasses with side shields or goggles should also be worn as necessary to complete facial PPE selections. Eye protection is recommended whenever splash hazards are present, when the agent you work with can infect via mucous membranes, and are always recommended for laboratory workers who wear contact lenses.

Over the River & Through the woods.....

As you travel to Grandma’s house for the holidays, make sure you check current weather forecasts and road conditions. The following links will help you with your travel plans.


North Dakota Road Conditions: http://www.dot.nd.gov/travel-info-v2/

South Dakota Road Conditions: http://www.safetravelusa.com/sd/

Winter Survival Kit App from NDSU Extension Service: http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/apps/winter-survival-kit

Minnesota Road Conditions: http://lbroadsheet.org/mlb/
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Annual Safety Training

As we come to the end of 2014 it is a good time to ensure you are up to date with Annual Safety Training.

Baseline Safety Training is a mandatory training for all North Dakota State University employees—faculty, staff and student employees. If you are a supervisor, it is mandatory that you take both Supervisor Safety Training and Baseline Safety Training. Both courses must be completed on an annual basis.

Online training is available and will require that you log in using your NDUS username and password. You will then review the training content and take the associated quiz. You will not need to submit a paper quiz to the Safety Office.

The following is the link to the online training courses: http://www.ndsu.edu/police_safety/training/

Track training is available to assist with tracking employee training completion and can be found at: https://apps.ndsu.edu/tracktraining/

Face to face training courses are offered at the following times. If attending a face to face training course, please make sure you bring your NDSU employee ID number with you, as it will be used to record your participation.

Baseline Safety Training:
12/22—9AM—MU Mandan
1/20—9AM—MU Meadow
2/18—9AM—MU Meadow

Supervisor Safety Training:
12/23—9AM—MU Meadow
1/21—9AM—MU Meadow
2/17—9AM—MU Mandan