

September 2018

Safety Newsletter

Worker Fatigue: Safety & Health

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Worker fatigue continues to be an issue affecting employees brought on by long work hours, lack of sleep, or medical and environmental factors. Fatigue can affect workers in a number of ways but can have a significant affect on worker safety and health.

According to the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), fatigue can cause weariness, sleepiness, irritability, reduced alertness, impaired decision making, and lack of motivation, concentration and memory. Studies have shown that fatigue is linked to health problems such as:

- Heart disease
- Stomach and digestive problems
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Reproductive problems
- Depression
- Some cancers (breast

and prostate)

- Sleep disorders
- Poor eating habits/obesity
- Worsening of existing chronic diseases such as diabetes and epilepsy

The good news is that there are steps we can take to prevent fatigue from encroaching into our lives. The National Safety Council suggests taking the following steps to prevent fatigue:

- Get enough sleep and provide for adequate rest between physically or cognitively demanding activities
- Talk to your doctor

about getting screened for sleeping disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea

- Align your natural body clock with your work schedule; some people who regularly fly through different time zones, for example, use melatonin to reset their circadian rhythms
- If you work the night shift, try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule even on your days off, and be sure to use blackout curtains to keep your bedroom dark



Return to Work Program

NDSU strives to provide a safe and healthy environment for all of its employees. As such, a high priority is placed not only on the prevention of injuries, but also on quality health care for injured employees and a strong return to work program. As noted in NDSU's Supervisor Safety training, recovery is 4 times faster when the injured employee is able to work.

NDSU's return to work program affords transitional

job duties for employees who become injured on the job. When an employee becomes injured, he/she may not be able to return immediately to performing all the tasks required of their job. Our current positions can be modified to accommodate the medical restrictions of injured employees by altering specific tasks, reducing work hours or modifying workstations and equipment. If this is not possible within the injured employee's depart-

ment, we'll make transitional jobs available elsewhere within the university for that employee.

By returning our injured employees to work as soon as they are medically able, and within their medical restrictions, we are working towards a goal of helping them heal and return to their regular jobs.

Safe Lifting

Lower back injuries are one of the most common ailments reported in the work place. The Safety Office would like to remind you to follow proper lifting techniques to help avoid injuries.

- If the object is too bulky or weighs 50 lbs. or more, get assistance or use a mechanical lift.
- Wear appropriate shoes to avoid slips, trips or falls.
- To lift object, separate feet and put one foot slightly in front of the other.
- Get a secure grip using both hands whenever possible.
- Keep the load close to your body and tighten the abdominal muscles as you lift, maintaining the 3 natural curves of your spine.
- Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- Use your legs to push up and lift the load. Do not use your upper body or back.
- Do not twist your body. Step to one side or the other to turn.
- Lower the load by bending at the knees

and keeping the back straight.

- Push instead of pull when moving a load.



Laboratory: Hotplate Safety

Last year on campus, we had a serious fire in a lab that may have been caused by a defective hotplate. In order to prevent a repeat of this incident, it is necessary for anyone in any lab setting to be aware of the potential for problems when using hotplates. Some “Best Practices” that should be observed are:

Engineering controls:

- Utilize Intrinsically Safer Technologies
- Utilize hotplate or heating device with feedback loop and/or over-temperature protection
- Avoid combination plates if possible. If only stirring is needed – purchase plate with stirring

function only

Administrative Controls:

- Disable hotplate when not in use: Unplug or use a switchable power strip or power supply
- Perform heating functions only when personnel are present and are monitoring heating
- Replace hotplates manufactured prior to 1984
- Cut the cord off of the equipment before discarding it to prevent reuse
- Keep hotplates in good condition
- Keep flammable solvents 2 feet away from hotplates, even when

not in use (on all sides, shelves/monkey bars)

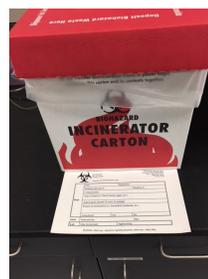
- Keep plastic, paper, cardboard, etc. at least 6 inches away from hotplates
- Clear shared work spaces of equipment and reagents when a procedure is finished



Laboratory: Waste Disposal

We regularly see confusion about laboratory waste disposal at the beginning of the semester. In order to protect the environment and comply with the laws, we must follow rules which may seem complex at first, but are actually fairly easy to understand. Of the required online Laboratory Safety Course Modules, [Module 2: Waste Handling](#) outlines

the proper procedures involved. If after completing this module you still have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Safety Office.



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Daylight Saving Time ends this year on Sunday November 4 at 2:00 AM. In addition to setting your clock back an hour, it's also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke/CO detectors throughout your home.

