

EH&S Newsletter: October 2024

Newsletter Highlights

Spills, Thrills, and Safety Skills: Avoiding Scary Mishaps.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Heads Up For This Month.....	1
Fright-Free Fire Safety: Avoiding Hazards.....	2
Ghosts of Chemicals Past: How to Handle Reactive Chemicals Safely.....	2
Haunting Missteps: Watch Your Step To Dodge Danger.....	3

Spills, Thrills, and Safety Skills: Avoiding Scary Mishaps

Introduction

As Halloween approaches, it's time to unmask the real workplace hazards lurking in the shadows. While ghouls and goblins may be a figment of our imagination, slips, trips, falls, and chemical mishaps can be all too real. In this edition, we'll shed light on the importance of situational awareness and proactive measures to keep our campus safe. With each haunting misstep, remember that being prepared can prevent your workday from turning into a frightful experience. Join us as we explore how to navigate these spooky situations and stay safe this season!

Heads Up For This Month

- The Lab Self Audit closes on October 31st at 11:50 PM! Check out the LSA webpage for access and helpful resources. <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/laboratory/index.html#3>
 - Unsure if the LSA applies to your space? Use the LSA Determination Survey found on the LSA webpage.
- The EH&S's Safety Scavenger Hunt winner is **Nicole McFarland!**
- Check out EH&S' Monthly Safety Shoutout or nominate someone/ a group for an EH&S' Safety Shout by visiting <https://ehs.fiu.edu>.

Fright-Free Fire Safety: Avoiding Hazards

As Halloween approaches, it's important to be aware of fire hazards in the workplace. Stay vigilant and take proactive steps to keep your workspace safe.

Deadly Décor: Keeping Decorations Fire-Safe

- **Avoid Hanging on Fire Sprinklers:** Decorations should never be hung on or near fire sprinkler heads, as this can prevent them from functioning properly during an emergency.
- **Keep Glass Panels and Exits Clear:** Ensure decorations don't cover glass panels on doors or windows, and never obstruct walkways, exits, or emergency equipment. In an emergency, visibility and unobstructed paths are crucial for safe egress and quick response.
- **No Candles Allowed:** Open flames are strictly prohibited in the workplace. Opt for battery-operated candles or other safe lighting options.

Everyday Fire Safety: Preventing the Unexpected

- **Don't Block Safety Equipment:** Ensure that fire extinguishers, alarms, and sprinkler systems are easily accessible and not obstructed. These devices are your first line of defense in case of a fire and must function properly without hindrance.
- **Manage Electrical Hazards:** Overloaded outlets, frayed cords, and faulty devices can lead to disaster. Avoid daisy-chaining power strips and overloading circuits, and always inspect equipment for wear. Turn off unused devices to prevent overheating.
- **Clear the Clutter:** Clutter feeds fires and blocks your path to safety in an emergency. Regularly inspect your workspace to ensure walkways, exits, and safety equipment are free of obstacles.

Prepared for the Flames: Know When to Act

- **Plan Emergency Evacuations:** Ensure your emergency evacuation procedures are up-to-date and reviewed annually, and conduct regular fire drills to keep everyone prepared.
- **Assess; Extinguish or Evacuate:** Use the nearest fire extinguisher for small fires and if you can maintain a clear exit. If the fire is too large or spreading rapidly, evacuate immediately, pull the fire alarm, and leave firefighting to the professionals. Every second counts!
- **Hands-On Fire Extinguisher Training:** EH&S provides hands-on fire extinguisher training to teach FIU Panthers to use one safely and effectively. Check out the Fire Extinguisher Webpage <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/fire/fire-extinguishers/index.html>.

Ghosts of Chemicals Past: How to Handle Reactive Chemicals Safely

Few things are scarier than reactive chemicals that can quickly become a nightmare. Reactive chemicals include self-reactive, pyrophoric, self-heating, organic peroxides, water-reactive, explosives, and shock-sensitive chemicals. With the proper handling and scheduled checks, reactive chemicals can be stored and used safely. Take time to address common “scary” mistakes in reactive chemical handling and learn how to avoid them.

Monitoring and Storing Reactive Chemicals: Proper monitoring and storage of reactive chemicals can prevent dangerous situations from escalating. Here are some basic steps you should follow to keep your lab safe:

- **Date and Label Containers:** Chemicals should be labeled with the date of receipt. Ensure your chemical inventory is in the EH&S Chemical Inventory System promptly. Check out the Chemical Safety Webpage here: <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/chemical/index.html>.
- **Segregate by Hazard Class:** Never store reactive chemicals with incompatible materials. For example, water-reactive substances must be kept far away from water sources and kept dry; remember, the humidity in Florida is high! Refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for specific storage recommendations.
- **Use Appropriate Containers:** Ensure the containers are compatible with the chemical. Some chemicals may degrade certain plastics or rubbers, leading to leaks or contamination. Check the containers and the lids to ensure tight-fitting lids to minimize exposure to air.
- **Regular Inspections:** Conduct regular inspections of your chemical storage areas. Ensure there are no leaks or degradation of the container and that the chemicals/materials have not altered in appearance. If a chemical forms crystals or appears cloudy, contact EH&S. Ensure that any expired or degraded chemicals are disposed of by requesting a hazardous waste pick up through the EH&S website. Check out the Hazardous Waste Webpage here: <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/environmental-compliance/index.html#3>.
- **Store in a Cool, Dry, and Well-Ventilated Area:** Most reactive chemicals must be stored in temperature-controlled environments, away from heat sources. Proper ventilation is key
- **Emergency Procedures:** Ensure your lab has an up-to-date emergency response plan for chemical spills or reactions. Conduct an annual training exercise covering the emergency procedures with everyone. Everyone in the lab should know where spill kits, fire extinguishers, and eyewash stations are located. In the event of an incident, evacuate the area immediately and call FIU Police at (305) 348-5911.

Haunting Missteps: Watch Your Step To Dodge Danger

In the workplace, the scariest hazards aren't ghosts or ghouls – they're the ones that sneak up on you in plain sight: slips, trips, and falls. FIU investigates and addresses workplace injuries to prevent mishaps. The power of situational awareness can help you spot and prevent these unfortunate mishaps. These incidents can happen in an instant. Avoid these frightful accidents and stay safe by sharpening your situational awareness.

The Power of Situational Awareness: Situational awareness means being fully aware of your surroundings and identifying potential hazards before they become real dangers. Paying attention is your first line of defense.

Don't Let Distractions Trick You: Distractions are among the biggest causes of slips, trips, and falls. To avoid these frightening mishaps, keep your focus on your surroundings, especially when walking through areas where hazards may exist.

- **Choose the Right Footwear:** Your shoes play a crucial role in preventing slips and trips. Wearing slip-resistant footwear can make all the difference. Ensure that your shoes are appropriate for your environment and that the soles provide enough grip to keep you steady on your feet.
- **Address Potential Hazards Immediately:** If you spot a hazard—whether it’s a spill, a loose cord, or something blocking a walkway—don’t assume someone else will take care of it. Report the issue immediately or, if possible, fix it yourself. Addressing hazards early is vital to preventing accidents down the road.
- **Keep Spaces Tidy:** Ensure that walkways are free of clutter, equipment, or materials that could obstruct the path. Encourage everyone to keep their workspaces clean.

Report Report Report!

If you have a close call or narrow escape, report it to EH&S using the reporting tool. EH&S follows up on all reports to ensure the health and safety of all FIU Panthers. You can remain anonymous and upload images and videos. Let's work together to make FIU a safer learning and working environment!

<https://ehs.fiu.edu/report/index.html>