

EH&S Newsletter: October 2026

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Tricks, Treats, and Safety Beats

Introduction

No tricks, just safety treats! As pumpkins glow and spooky season arrives, October reminds us to stay alert to the hazards that aren't part of a costume. This month, we recognize Biosafety and Biosecurity Month and Fire Prevention Month, highlighting the important role we all play in keeping our campus safe, secure, and prepared. Have a fa-boo-lous and safe Halloween!

Heads Up For This Month

- October is Fire Safety Month!
- October is Biosafety and Biosecurity Month!
- The 2026 EH&S Lab Self-Audit (LSA) closes on October 31st!
- NEW! EH&S Micro-credential course – Fundamentals of Lab Safety. Student and employee sessions are open! Click here for more information: <https://ehs.fiu.edu/announcements/index.html>
- Consider nominating someone for an EH&S Safety Shout Out today by visiting <https://ehs.fiu.edu>.

Celebrate Fire Prevention Month with EH&S!

October is Fire Prevention month - a nationwide event aimed at raising fire safety and fire prevention awareness. October 4-10 was also Fire Prevention Week. Thank you to everyone that stopped by during our Fire Prevention Week Tabling events at the Graham Center and Wolfe University Center. We hope you were able to learn more about the importance of proper lithium-ion battery use, charging, and storage.

This spooky season is the perfect time to focus on fire safety at work and at home. Here's how you can scare away potential fire hazards:

- Use battery-operated candles instead of open flames in pumpkins.
- Keep decorations away from heat sources.
- Never block exits, fire extinguishers, or alarm pull stations with decorations.

Before you enjoy the treats, take on this no-tricks fire prevention challenge! Set a timer for five minutes and see if you can: find your two nearest exits, locate the closest fire extinguisher, and review your evacuation route.

The 2026 Lab Self-Audit Closes October 31st!

The 2026 Lab Self-Audit (LSA) officially closes on October 31st. This year, the LSA is accessible on the FIU CampusOptics platform: https://fiu.campusoptics.com/users/sign_in . Here are a few important things you should know to ensure a successful submission.

1. Make sure to read and review the tutorial to learn how to find the LSA: <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/laboratory/2026-lsa-presentation.pdf>
2. Keep an eye out for upcoming notifications.
3. If you have any questions, reach out to the support contacts before the deadline.

Essential Information at a Glance

Deadline: October 31, 2026

Required Participation: An individual LSA must be submitted for each space with hazards (or as assigned in Campus Optics)

Support Contacts:

Margarita Kotzer, mkhabins@fiu.edu

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Gina Oubrar, gigallia@fiu.edu

Where can I find more information?

Check the Lab Safety webpage for more information and additional resources: <https://ehs.fiu.edu/safety-programs/laboratory/index.html>

General Safety Talk 101: Ladder Safety!

Hanging up your ghostly decorations for Halloween can be scarier than it seems. Especially if you are not using your ladder safely.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimated that an average of 3,200 injuries were related to Halloween, with 25% due to falls putting up or taking down decorations, tripping on costumes, or walking while trick-or-treating (2022). Here are a few tips on how you can prevent ladder-related injuries during this Halloween season:

- Inspect your ladder before you use it. A damaged ladder means a potential injury
- Place your ladder on a stable, level surface
- Always maintain three points (two hands and one foot OR two feet and one hand) of contact on the ladder when climbing
- Never use a metal ladder near power lines or carry tools in your hand while climbing.

October is Biosafety and Biosecurity Month!

October 2026 marked the 12th anniversary of the ABSA Biosafety and Biosecurity Month. This event originally began in 2014 as “National Biosafety Stewardship Month” sponsored by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and was officially passed to ABSA in 2017 to continue the legacy.

This year’s theme focused on enhancing biosafety and biosecurity through technology. EH&S encouraged everyone to think about how advances in technology and AI integration will continue to impact research at FIU.

To celebrate Biosafety and Biosecurity Month, EH&S hosted a webinar on October 15th where we discussed the importance of nurturing a culture of responsibility and research excellence. We also provided insight into how EH&S is currently using technology to support biosafety and biosecurity through CampusOptics.

The integration of digital tools allows EH&S to actively update information in real-time, quickly identify concerns, address biosafety needs, and navigate regulatory updates; supporting safer research across all FIU campuses and sites.