

LABORATORY & RADIATION SAFETY

Cornell University Department of Environmental Health & Safety

125 Humphreys Service Building, Ithaca, NY (Tel. 255-8200)

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NEWS

Spring 1999



ODOR INCIDENT ON CAMPUS

There was an incident on campus recently involving a small spill of an organic sulfur compound that smelled like natural gas. **If you spill an extremely malodorous compound, especially if it is a sulfur-containing compound that mimics the odor of natural gas, it is very important that you call 5-1111 and notify the Cornell University Police immediately.** The same applies if you are using a larger quantity of a sulfur-containing compound in a fume hood and there is a chance of evaporation of a significant amount of material.

The situation occurred in a lab when a cap broke off a bottle and a very small quantity (five milliliters) was spilled, which was then released into the atmosphere via the fume hood. The odor was from a mercaptan material, which is similar to the material that is added to natural gas to give it a scent as a warning property. The odor threshold of this material is very low, so it can be detected at extremely low levels. Thus, a very large area of campus was affected by an odor similar to that of the substance added to natural gas. This resulted in a nuisance level concentration across campus and was very offensive to smell. No combustible environments were created. The incident resulted in hundreds of phone calls to the Cornell University Police, the Customer Service Center, and EH&S. About 50 individuals from the City of Ithaca Fire Department, NYSEG, the Cornell University Police, EH&S emergency responders, the EH&S Laboratory and Radiation Safety Section, the Utilities department, and other units responded to what was feared to be a substantial natural gas leak. There was serious discussion of evacuating numerous buildings and potentially evacuating the entire central campus.

Many Cornell staff in various buildings were very alarmed. Much time was spent by the emergency responders who looked for a nonexistent natural gas leak. An alert facility coordinator realized that the source of the odor may have come from his building. He did a little detective work and quickly found the lab that had the spill. EH&S was there in a matter of minutes and the incident was, by then, effectively over.

The spill in the lab would not have been of any consequence except for the extreme odor of the material and the fact that it mimicked the odor of the material added to natural gas. However, as the result of these properties, an "incident" involving dozens of Cornell staff directly, and many more indirectly, occurred. Your cooperation in promptly reporting such spills to the Cornell Police will "call off the troops" before

they are deployed and prevent a significant waste of time and resources from many of your colleagues. Accidental spills occur occasionally and you are encouraged to report such a spill to the police.

NEW BIOSAFETY POSITION

We are pleased to announce that Frank Cantone has accepted the position of Assistant Biological Safety Officer for Environmental Health & Safety. He will assist Andy Garcia-Rivera, Biological Safety Officer and Director of EH&S, with the development, implementation, and management of a comprehensive campus biohazard control program and related services. Frank received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from Purdue University. His most recent position was as a research microbiologist at the USDA Plant, Soil and Nutrition Laboratory on Tower Road. Prior to that he worked as a research associate at Boyce Thompson Institute. He brings to EH&S valuable experience in the area of microbiology, which will be readily applied to the creation of a new biological safety program for Cornell.

Frank will also provide emergency response functions for campus biohazard emergencies. He gained experience in emergency response during his three years of service as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician with the Ithaca Fire Department.

CHEMICAL SAFETY TRAINING

The next new employee laboratory worker OSHA Laboratory Standard training programs, "Chemical Safety for Laboratory Workers", will be held in the training room at 118 Humphreys Service Building on:

Wednesday, April 7, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Wednesday, May 5, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Wednesday, June 2, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Please contact Veronica Parsons-Zieba by e-mail at vjp4@cornell.edu or by phone at 254-4693 to register.

PARKING FOR EH&S TRAINING PROGRAMS

Did you know that **free** parking is provided for you while you are attending training programs at EH&S? There are eight visitor parking spaces in the parking lot to the west of the EH&S office. **You must go to the Customer Service Office (Door 2 of Humphreys Service Building) to request a parking permit (free) in order to park in these visitor spots.**

There are additional parking spaces in the center of the parking lot to the west of the East Ithaca Building (outside the Transportation Services office). This parking lot is entered from Maple Avenue. This lot allows two hour parking, but if you let Transportation Services know that you are visiting EH&S you may make arrangements to park there for up to four hours.

YOUR REQUESTS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED: NEW RADIATION SAFETY EMAIL LIST

As a result of numerous requests from record keepers to send information directly to them, a new radiation safety email list has been set up. This list is open only to authorized radioactive material users at Cornell. The main function for this list is to inform interested individuals when mailings, such as updates to the Radiation Safety Manual, have been sent out to the permit holders. This facilitates easier lines of communication with EH&S and within the labs. The list may also be used for discussion of radiation safety-related issues at Cornell. We encourage anyone who may have record keeping responsibilities, including permit holders, to subscribe to this list, as it will help keep you informed of radiation safety issues. To subscribe to the list, send an email addressed to listproc@cornell.edu with a blank subject line. In the body of the message include the text "subscribe CU-RadSafety-L *first name last name*". For *first and last name* substitute your own first and last name. Please do not include any additional text or a signature to the body of the message, as the list server will not know how to deal with that information and will send you an error message. The request will be forwarded by the list server to Lorna Bullerwell, the list owner, for approval to be added to the list. If you have any questions regarding this list, please feel free to contact Lorna at ljb1@cornell.edu or 255-8816.

RADIATION SAFETY MANUAL REVISION

The Radiation Safety Manual has recently been revised and updated. The revised edition will soon be mailed to everyone who has been issued a manual. Please review it and become familiar with the new information.

RADIATION SAFETY TRAINING

Individuals must receive radiation safety training **prior** to starting work with radioactive materials. This training is required by law. The course is given in two separate presentations; both sessions must be attended. There is a short exam, which can be taken either at the end of the second day, or later at our office during normal business hours. Please bring your university ID number. *Prior registration for this course is necessary, as seating is assigned on a first come first served basis.*

To register for this course, please call the EH&S main desk, at 5-8200.

Following is the training schedule:

April 20 & 22	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
May 24 & 26	1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
June 22 & 24	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

ADVANCED RECORD KEEPER TRAINING

This special radiation safety training is held monthly, on the last Friday of every month. It is geared just for those who perform and record the monthly lab meter/wipe test surveys and for those who do monthly reports to reconcile the individual stock vial inventory sheets. The survey class, taught by Chris Bell, is from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m., and the inventory class, taught by Marlene Larson, is from 2:15 to 3:15 p.m. **Call Agnes Morris at 5-5600 for the class schedule or to register.** See the tentative schedule below:

Register by:	Class Date:
April 23	April 30
May 21	May 28
June 18	June 25

★ Radiation Safety Eagle Awards ★

We are pleased to recognize the following laboratories for receiving radiation safety awards:

January

J. MacLeod, Vet Baker Institute
A. Bretscher, Biochem., Molec. & Cell Biol., Biotech. Bldg.
J. Roberts, Biochem., Molec. & Cell Biol., Biotech. Bldg.
R. Granados, Entomology, Boyce Thompson Institute
* **R. Cerione**, Veterinary Molecular Medicine, VMC
R. Levine, Veterinary Molecular Medicine, VMC
A. Nixon, Veterinary Clinical Science, VMC
B. Pauli, Veterinary Molecular Medicine, VMC
M. Roberson, Veterinary Biomedical Science, VMC
G. Sharp, Veterinary Molecular Medicine, VMC

February

* **G. Blissard**, Boyce Thompson Institute
M.A. Toper, Boyce Thompson Institute
W. Arion, Nutritional Sciences, Kinzelberg Hall
C. McCormick, Nutritional Sciences, Kinzelberg Hall
M. Stipanuk, Nutritional Sciences, Kinzelberg Hall
P. Stover, Nutritional Sciences, Kinzelberg Hall
G. Evans, Design & Environmental Analysis, MVR
B. Baird, Chemistry and Chemical Biology, S. T. Olin Hall
T. Begley, Chemistry and Chemical Biology, S. T. Olin Hall

March

C. Aquadro, Genetics & Development, Biotech. Bldg.
T. Fox, Genetics & Development, Biotech. Bldg.
* **K. Kempfues**, Genetics & Development, Biotech. Bldg.
M. Wolfner, Genetics & Development, Biotech. Bldg.
E. Earle, Plant Breeding, Bradfield Hall
M. K. Jahn, Plant Breeding, Bradfield Hall
R. Loria, Plant Pathology, Bradfield Hall
S. McCouch, Plant Breeding, Bradfield Hall
M. Milgroom, Plant Pathology, Bradfield Hall
M. Sorrells, Plant Breeding, Bradfield Hall
J. Steffens, Plant Breeding, Bradfield Hall
R. Spanswick, Plant Biology, Emerson Hall
G. Hrazdina, Geneva Experimental Station
L. Lion, Civil & Environmental Engineering, Hollister Hall
S. Gray, Plant Pathology, VN Lab

* Winners of Party Packs from Puggies Pizza