



*Environmental Health
Safety*

Guardian

Florida State University

Fall 2009

A Newsletter of the
FSU

EHS

Department

EH&S: 850-644-6895 Fax 850-644-8842
www.safety.fsu.edu email:ehs@admin.fsu.edu

GUARDIAN, is published periodically by The Florida State University Department of Environmental Health and Safety

1200 Carothers Hall
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4481

Director
Tom Jacobson
tjacobson@admin.fsu.edu

Editor
Amanda Boor
a boor@admin.fsu.edu

Contributors:
Amanda Boor
David Bujak
Paul Burress
Laymon Gray
Mark Klawinski
Renee Murray

The *GUARDIAN* is available in alternative format upon request and on the web at
www.safety.fsu.edu/guardian.html

Please recycle this
newsletter when finished.



Consider the Driving Hazards

Florida Safety Belt Law Goes Into Effect

As of June 30, 2009, the operators, as well as passengers, are to be restrained by a safety belt or child restraint device. The main difference with the new Florida Safety Belt law and the preexisting law is that before June 30, 2009, police officers could not pull you over for driving without wearing your safety belt. Previously, they could only cite you for not wearing your belt while pulling you over for other offenses. Presently, officers are able to pull you over if they notice you are not wearing your safety belt. It is believed that the new law could result in a 90% increase of lives saved during motor vehicle accidents.



What's wrong with this picture? See page 4

It appears that the Florida State University Police are feeling the effects of the new law. General ticketing at FSU has actually decreased in the last **Continued on Page 4**

FSU Administrators Come Together to Respond to Disaster Exercise

On Friday, July 24, a fictitious bombing occurred in Oglesby Union that resulted in significant loss of life, injuries, property damage, and business disruption. This scenario was the challenge that nearly 100 university administrators from over 40 different departments on campus faced during a facilitated disaster exercise. While emergency response agencies such as FSU Police, Tallahassee Fire Department, and Leon County Emergency Medical Services train and drill regularly on emergency response procedures, this was the first time that an exercise was conducted to engage the roles and responsibilities of all the other campus entities that would have a part to play in a major campus emergency once the first response agencies have left the scene.



The exercise was funded by the State Legislature via the Florida Division of Emergency Management. It was designed and conducted by the Florida Public Affairs Center and the Center for Disaster Risk Policy, which reside at FSU. Exercise participants were subjected to a fast-paced barrage of information and issues to address. Every department was challenged with potential problems or complications that were pertinent to their areas of expertise.

The exercise scenario was carried out in three time phases: 2 – 8 hours, 8 – 48 hours, and 3 to 10 days post accident. These time frames allowed participants to focus on the unique aspects that vary with time. Some key focus areas for the group included: communications, environmental health, public information, **Continued on Page 3**

Electric Vehicle Battery Safety

Why is it important to consider safety when it comes to electric vehicle batteries? According to the United States Eye Injury Registry, nearly 6,000 motorists each year suffer serious eye injuries from working around vehicle batteries. Electric vehicles, such as golf carts and utility carts, often have batteries containing sulfuric acid and produce hydrogen and oxygen gases. If the hydrogen gas comes in contact with a spark source, the battery can explode. This explosion will send acid and pieces of battery flying in a wide arc where both skin and delicate eye tissue can be cut by the debris and burned by the sulfuric acid. If a battery should explode and acid enters the eyes, quickly dilute the acid by irrigating the eyes with water and then proceed immediately to the nearest urgent care or emergency room for professional treatment.



Battery Safety Tips

- Batteries contain hydrogen and oxygen, two flammable and explosive gasses. Never smoke or operate anything that may cause a spark when working on a battery. The gasses may ignite and cause the battery to explode.
- Check your battery routinely for damage such as cracks, corrosive materials, and loose wires as often as you have your oil changed.
- Make sure that you have jumper cables that are rust and corrosion free and have no exposed wires. (Never use electrical tape to cover exposed wires.)
- Make sure you purchase a battery that is recommended in your car owner's manual. Be certain that its terminals are sturdy and large enough to allow the clamps of a pair of jumper cables to attach easily when jump-starting.
- Never throw a battery in a garbage dumpster or leave it in a parking lot, especially if it is cracked or damaged. Take the battery to a service station or a battery source center to have it properly disposed. The Leon County Solid Waste Division on Apalachee Parkway is a no fee disposal option specifically for Leon County households. There are even times that they will pick up items at a closer location to you. Please see www.leoncountyfl.gov/HHW/roundups2.asp
- Never jump-start your battery if your car's fluids are frozen.
- Use proper lifting techniques when moving batteries. Batteries are small, but heavy and awkward to lift. Be sure to wash your hands after completing the job.
- When cleaning a battery acid spill, personal protective equipment such as appropriate gloves and safety glasses are to be worn. Pour baking soda on a minor battery acid spill. After the spill has been neutralized (no longer bubbling) carefully wipe up and dispose as regular trash. Flush any soiled clothing with a water and baking soda solution. If there is a major battery acid spill on the FSU campus or if you are uncomfortable cleaning any size spill, contact Environmental Health & Safety at 644-6895 or 644-1234 after standard working hours.
- Vent caps should be tight and level. Placing a damp cloth over vent caps when charging may cause a flame to occur.
- Keep batteries away from children.
- Always call a professional if you can't remember how to jump-start a vehicle.

Do You Plan To Renovate Your Space?

FSU maintains a number of older buildings that may contain hazardous materials such as asbestos. Proper management of these materials ensures the safety of building occupants and prevents possible adverse impacts to the environment. FSU manages the asbestos-containing materials (ACM) in place, as recommended by EPA, until it is removed due to renovation or demolition. When an ACM will be impacted during a major and minor renovation project managed by the Department of Facilities, EH&S assists with determining the locations of the ACM and provides guidance on its effective removal. Other FSU administrative or academic departments planning to perform activities that will disturb building materials (e.g., carpet replacement, new ceiling installation, etc.) by hiring vendors on their own, or using their own staff, must coordinate with Facilities and EH&S to determine if ACM will be affected.

If you plan to renovate or modify an FSU space that may impact building materials, contact Mark Klawinski, EHS Asbestos Coordinator, at 644-8177, and/or Jim Standley, Facilities Asbestos Project Manager, at 645-2173, as soon as possible in the planning stages of work activities that have the potential to disturb ACM, or if it is *unknown* whether or not the material contains asbestos. Other contacts are Facilities Program Assistant Karly Pagel at 645-2948 and the Service Center at 644-2424 - 24/7.

NEVER ASSUME MATERIALS DO NOT CONTAIN ASBESTOS. Doing so could expose building occupants to airborne asbestos fibers. When applicable, vendors and contractors working in the buildings are to be informed as to the presence of ACM.

FSU Alert Upgrades

The University has made a number of upgrades to its FSU ALERT emergency notification system. In August, a grant from the State Legislature funded the installation of "Voice Over Fire Alarm" capabilities in six buildings: Classroom, Strozier Library, Dunlap Success Center, Chemical Sciences Labs, Psychology Department, and Leach Center. This system allows for the broadcast of messages indoors over the fire alarm system when the outdoor warning sirens are activated. Updates to the databases that feed numbers to the Text Messaging system are ongoing. These updates will allow the University to target messages by campus, students vs. faculty, and even resident vs. commuter students. Parents and families will begin to receive FSU ALERT information with the Parent Connection E-mail List Serve operated by the Dean of Students office. This fall, additional outdoor warning sirens will be installed at the Southwest Campus serving Alumni Village, FAMU/FSU College of Engineering, and the National High Magnetics Field Laboratory area.

Stormwater System – A Mystery and Success Story?

The stormwater system at FSU is massive and a lot of water passes through it during periods of heavy rainfall. Most of this system is underground and there are hundreds of grated drains and ditches feeding into it along the way. Our system is just a small part of the City of Tallahassee's municipal system. One leg enters our campus near DeGraff Hall and exits just south of the Doak Campbell Stadium near Lake Bradford Road where it intersects with other components of the system.

Stormwater systems are designed to handle rainfall and prevent flooding during storm events. We only want *stormwater* in our storm drains.

Unfortunately, sometimes stormwater contains more than just rain; sediment, nutrients, solid waste, petroleum and other waste end up in our stormwater systems. To prevent these unwanted pollutants in our stormwater runoff, vigilance and awareness is required of all members of our University community. EH&S personnel perform formal inspections of the system parts every few weeks, that are augmented by a handful of Facilities and City of Tallahassee employees who also provide random monitoring and oversight. In addition, EH&S staff perform investigations every few months initiated by conscientious personnel who call to report suspected problems or observed prohibited discharges.

A typical investigation happened in July. Several of us received a call very early in the morning from an alert Facilities Pipe Shop crew about a mysterious liquid flowing through a culvert that should have been dry, as it had not rained for several days. These plumbers routinely look in ditches and culverts as they travel campus. They are especially interested in flows during dry spells that likely indicate problems with campus utilities. They used a ladder to enter the culvert to collect a sample and try to determine the origin. The liquid appeared to be something akin to traditional

green anti-freeze (or perhaps that nasty green sports drink developed in Gainesville many years ago!). It had no odor, was not slippery or otherwise objectionable and whatever was causing the green color appeared to be extremely fine or fully soluble in water. This substance did not produce any sheen on the surface of the liquid.

Two City of Tallahassee Stormwater Inspectors and six FSU personnel spread out and surveyed all the potential upstream entry points. Everything was dry without any apparent illicit discharges having occurred with the exception of an area where new sod had been installed about one month prior. This area had been watered earlier that morning, which at least could explain the water flow since none existed further upstream. The cause of the green coloring is still somewhat of a mystery; it quickly dissipated and has not since recurred. It was likely a result of the sod installation project, perhaps through nutrient loading and growth of organisms in the stagnant pools of the underground culvert that were subsequently flushed out.

The green ditch was an undesirable finding. The success was that FSU personnel were proactive in stormwater protection by noticing and reporting this problem then investigating and seeking solutions in partnership with our City of Tallahassee colleagues. Thankfully, it was not an illegal disposal of anti-freeze, paint or other hazardous material. If you ever notice anything suspicious, please report it by calling 644-6895 or 644-2424 so EH&S can respond.

Golf Cart Procedure Reminder

The Golf Cart Procedure has been in effect since February 2009. Have you read the policy? If you are an employee, volunteer, or agent of the University and operate a University golf cart or utility vehicle, you are required to read, understand, and acknowledge the procedure by completing an Operator Acknowledgement form found at <http://www.safety.fsu.edu/golfcarts.html>. Be safe and be sure to submit your signed forms to the Environmental Health & Safety!



Disaster Exercise from Page 1

public safety, mental health, family reunification, continuity of operations, human resource, student accountability, and legal and liability issues.

Representatives from each of the ten other State universities were also in attendance. Their roles were two-fold: to act as evaluators and to take lessons learned back to their own institutions. "Not only did it allow me to observe a sister institution's emergency operations but also provoked considerations for improvements in our own planning and response activities," said Kenneth Allen, University of Florida's Emergency Management Coordinator.

Overall, the exercise went extremely well and was highly valued by all who participated. Through practice during exercises such as this one, campus administrators can face challenges and learn lessons in an environment where lives are not on the line. This exercise will allow them to be better prepared to respond when, not if, a real incident occurs. An After-Action Report and Improvement Plan will be developed and shared with the FSU Emergency Management Team to identify ways

Good Housekeeping Practices at the Office

- Keep work areas clean, free of clutter and arranged properly.
- Keep aisles, exits, and entrances free of obstructions.
- Keep floors clean, dry, and in good condition.
- Vacuum or sweep dusty areas frequently.
- Use proper waste containers.
- Keep sprinklers, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers clear of obstructions.
- Clean up spills and leaks of any type quickly and properly.
- Clean and store tools and equipment properly.
- Fix or report broken or damaged tools and equipment promptly.
- Watch for wear and damage to electrical cables, cords, plugs, and outlets.
- Remove from service any damaged electrical equipment including damaged cords and switches.
- Watch for signs of overloaded electrical circuits.
- Keep lighting sources clean and clear.

Driving Hazards from Page 1

12 months. Adversely, since the new law went into effect, citations for seat belt noncompliance has increased 39.5% for the month of July 2009 compared to July 2008. This increase indicates that there are many campus drivers who are not wearing a safety belt. An FSU employee driving an FSU vehicle is fair game regarding ticketing. If an employee chooses to drive an FSU vehicle without wearing a seat belt, the driver not only breaks the state of Florida safety belt law but also is in violation of the OP-C-9 Use of State Vehicle Policy.

Talking, texting, tacos and tomato soup?

Anything that takes your eyes off the road or your hands off the wheel is likely to lead to a car crash (or a near-miss if you are lucky).

Eating is a dangerous distraction for people while driving. Do not eat food or drink beverages while driving. If you must, avoid these items while driving:

1. Hot-coffee and soup-to-go can spill or cause you to burn your mouth in an instant.
2. Greasy foods such as tacos, chili dogs, and chicken wings make your steering wheel a mess and cause you to divert your concentration from driving to handling food.
3. Goopy foods such as a jelly donut or breakfast burrito have the same issue as greasy foods. How will you get that stain out before a morning meeting?

Eight out of ten drivers who own a cell phone admit to talking while driving and 18% admit to texting while driving according to a 2008 Nationwide Mutual study. In fact, 45% of drivers in the survey reported they were involved in a crash or near-accident with a driver who was using a cell phone.

Scientists have documented a type of adrenaline rush that follows the “ping” from a cell phone message notification. Although you know you shouldn’t peek at a text while driving, it’s an urge that’s tough to resist. Driving can get boring, so a quick cell phone call or glance at a text message makes you feel better, until the distraction proves dangerous.

Just how dangerous can it be? In July 2009, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) released data that provides a clear picture of driver distraction and cell phone use under real-world conditions.

Combined, these studies continuously observed drivers for more than 6 million miles of driving. A snapshot of risk estimates from these studies is shown in the table below.

Cell Phone Task	Risk of Crash or Near Crash Event
Light Vehicle/Cars	
Dialing Cell Phone	2.8 times as high as non-distracted driving
Talking/Listening to Cell Phone	1.3 times as high as non-distracted driving
Reaching for object (i.e. electronic device and other)	1.4 times as high as non-distracted driving
Heavy Vehicles/Trucks	
Dialing Cell phone	5.9 times as high as non-distracted driving
Talking/Listening to Cell Phone	1.0 times as high as non-distracted driving
Use/Reach for electronic device	6.7 times as high as non-distracted driving
Text messaging	23.2 times as high as non-distracted driving

VTTI’s recommendations based on findings from research studies are:

- Driving is a visual task and non-driving activities that draw the driver’s eyes away from the road should always be avoided.
- Texting should be banned in moving vehicles for all drivers.
- “Headset” cell phone use is not substantially safer than “hand-held” use because the primary risks associated with both tasks is answering, dialing, and other tasks that require your eyes to be off the road.
- All cell phone use should be banned for newly licensed teen drivers.

The results of the study show conclusively that a real key to significantly improving safety is **keeping your eyes on the road**. The full text of the article is available for download at VTTI’s website. <http://www.vtti.vt.edu/>

Tidbits

- If you are involved in an automobile accident in an FSU vehicle or other vehicle while in work status, you must report the accident to Environmental Health and Safety. Go to <http://www.safety.fsu.edu/forms/auto-accident.pdf> for details on reporting the accident.
- Given the ongoing emergence of the H1N1 Influenza Virus and the predicted impacts to the FSU Community, the FSU H1N1 Task Force, representing numerous departments on campus, has developed a dedicated web site. The site includes information about signs, symptoms, prevention, student absence policies, employee absence policies, purchasing policies, and more. Website: <http://h1n1.fsu.edu>.
- October is National Fire Prevention Month. Plan and practice your home evacuation this month!
- Nine of the top ten hurricanes to hit the United States impacted Florida. The largest Hurricane to hit Florida was in 1992 named Hurricane Andrew and caused 22.9 billion in insurable damages.
- Be sure children know their address. Have them pretend to call 9-1-1 and practice talking clearly and calmly.

Answer from page 1: Driver is not wearing seatbelt, is texting and talking on phone while driving.



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Environmental Health and Safety
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4481

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tallahassee, FL
Permit 55