

"There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and cost of comfortable inaction." *President John F. Kennedy*



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5

MS IHL OFFICE OF  
INSURANCE AND RISK  
MANAGEMENT

# SAFETY & LOSS CONTROL NEWS

MARCH 2005

## SPRING CLEANING FOR GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY

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### NEED HELP WITH RECYCLING?

For help in locating a recycler for your "spring cleaning", the MS Department of Environmental Quality has many directories on their Environmental Resource Center web page. Go to:

[http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/ERC\\_SmallBusTechAssist?OpenDocument](http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/ERC_SmallBusTechAssist?OpenDocument)

For additional help, contact Andy Taylor at 601-432-6659 or [attaylor@ihl.state.ms.us](mailto:attaylor@ihl.state.ms.us)

### Food for thought -

*Are some people "accident prone", or are they just prone to risky behavior that results in accidents?*

This is the time of year human instinct leads us to clean up our surroundings. If you are tidying up at home, why not do the same at work? I don't mean for your customers if your job is to clean things. I mean for yourself. Your work area or base of operations. Take a look in the mirror and see what needs doing.

Many campuses (not yours, of course!) have piles or stacks of used materials that seem to have taken up residence. Some have rooms full of leftover or spare supplies, because someone thought it might be needed "later" or because no one knew how to get rid of it.

Nearly all of these "stockpiles" are not only unsightly, they are usually hazardous to you, your co-workers, passers-by, or the environment. "Spring cleaning" would benefit all.

## STUDENT HOUSING FIRES STUDIED

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recently completed a study of dormitory fires that provides some information useful for fire prevention on campus. While the report is entitled "Dormitory Structure Fires", NFPA includes fraternity and sorority houses in the same group. Apartments were not included. Using the lessons learned from past fires is an excellent tool for keeping our students and buildings safe.

The most recent year studied was 2001. During that year, an estimated 2,530 dormitory fires were reported. Those fires resulted in six deaths, 82 injuries, and \$48.5 million in property damage.

### Some Common Hazards:

**Tires** - When left outside, they collect water that become habitat for many insects including mosquitoes and the potential for disease transmission, such as West Nile virus. Piles of tires also provide habitat for rodents and other carriers of disease.

**Oil** - One gallon of used oil can pollute one million gallons of water. When open or leaking containers are left outdoors, rain transports it into the soil and water through run-off or leaching. There is also a fire hazard present.

**Batteries** - Auto batteries contain hydrochloric acid and lead. Stored outdoors, rain and leaks can distribute the acid into the same soil and water. Stored indoors, the possibility of hydrogen gas build-up occurs. One spark, and.....Boom!

**Paint** - Typically saved for future use (and usually not useable anymore), paint seems to be a favorite. Hazards include toxic vapors, flammability, lead exposure (in some older paints), spillage, and environmental toxicity if stored outside and exposed to rain or leaking.

**Ballasts** - Ballasts that have been taken out of fluorescent lights contain toxic mercury. If made prior to 1976, they may also contain PCBs, a known carcinogen. Leaks are common.

### What to do:

If you can't or won't **use it** - get rid of it. All of the above can be **recycled**.

If you must store it, **protect it** from the weather and **protect people** from it.

Don't add to the pile. Many items can be "**turned in**" when new items are purchased.

Annually, there are an average of 2,240 dormitory fires across the United States. They occurred at all hours of the day & night, every day of the week. Slightly more fires occurred on weekends. Two observations that stand out are where and how the fires started.

**Where** - The largest number of fires started in the kitchen (39%). NFPA cites three requirements for a fire: **a heat source, flammable materials, and unsafe behavior**. The oven/range provides an abundant source of heat. The next frequent place for a fire to start is in bedroom areas (22%). This is followed by hallways (9%).

**How** - Given that most fires start in the kitchen, it is not surprising to learn that cooking is the leading cause of fires (41%). Grease used for frying, and unattended stoves/ovens have frequently been cited. In contrast, only 29% of fires in all residential structures (off campus / non-students) were started by cooking. The next frequent causes were intentional (24%), open flames such as candles (9%), and smoking (8%).

Focus on these places and causes, coupled with attention to heat sources, flammable materials, and behavior, seems to make good sense in regard to preventing fires on your campus.

## DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSE OFFERED

The National Safety Council's four hour Defensive Driving Course (DDC-4) is now available at no cost to IHL member institutions. This fast-paced driver improvement program makes an ideal refresher course. Attendees will learn practical strategies to reduce collision-related injuries, fatalities, and costs. DDC-4 addresses the importance of attitude in preventing accidents and reinforces good driving skills that drivers already have.

Drivers who attend will learn practical techniques to avoid

accidents, and to choose safe, responsible, and lawful driving behaviors. Focus is on the consequences of the choices drivers make behind the wheel. Course content includes:

**Rules, Regulations & Responsibility** - benefits of driving defensively, MS Code, air bags & seat belts, impaired driving.

**Driving Conditions** - 3 second rule, controlling a skid, driving environment, vehicle maintenance, fatigue.

**Unsafe Driving Behaviors** - "sinister six", speeding, right-

of-way, passing tips, avoiding a head-on crash, tailgating.

**Aggressive Driving vs. Road Rage** - developing the "safe attitude", dealing with aggressive drivers, reducing stress and aggression.

Successful participants will receive an official National Safety Council certificate.

**Classes of up to 25 people can be scheduled by contacting Andy Taylor at:**

*attaylor@ihl.state.ms.us* or 601-432-6659. Two classes per day may be possible.

## SAFETY MEETING TOPIC: LAWN MOWING SAFETY

The lawn mowing season is about to get into full swing, and with that usually comes increases in liability claims and injuries. Let's see if we can break that trend this year!

As mentioned last month, more than half of all bonafide general liability claims against our institutions are generated by lawn mowing operations. Whether its someone operating a mower or a weed-eater, claims for broken glass are averaging about \$371.00 per incident. Notice I said "someone operating..." and not just mowers and weed-eaters. The equipment without an operator just sits there not hurting anyone. Whether the operator is careful or careless can determine if and how much damage is caused.

What can operators do to prevent harming themselves or others? The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, the National Ag Safety Database, and MCES publication # 1097 all offer great advise that I have summarized for you here.

**Know how to operate the equipment.** Read the owners manual before using. Know

where controls are and what they do. Know about built-in safety features and how they work. Do not remove or disable safety features (such as guards or kill-switches). Follow instructions on warning stickers found in several places.

**Dress properly for the job.** A loose shoelace, baggy or loose clothing, long flowing hair and dangling jewelry have all been responsible for horrendous injuries and deaths after becoming entangled in moving parts. Wear long pants, close-fitting clothes, tucked-in shirts, sturdy shoes, and eye and ear protection to avoid a trip to the emergency room or morgue.

**Handle fuel carefully.** One gallon of gas has the explosive power of 33 sticks of dynamite. Fill before starting when engine is cool. Let engine cool before re-starting. Don't spill. Use labeled containers designed for fuel (not milk jugs!). Do not smoke around fuel.

**Clear area before you start.** Remove anything that could be thrown by equipment such as: rocks, branches or trash. Is

skipping this step worth \$371.00 to you? You may need to stop periodically to do this on large jobs as you progress. You probably needed to stretch your legs and refuel anyway!

**Operate the equipment carefully (not carelessly).** Keep discharge shoots pointing away from people, streets, parking lots, vehicles and buildings. You may even need to stop momentarily while a group of people or cars passes by. Never allow any riders. Beware slope! A riding mower may roll over if crossing a steep enough slope. Ride up and down slope to avoid this. Avoid wet grass. Many injuries come from slipping while pushing a mower or using a weed-eater. Turn off engine and remove key (if there is one) prior to leaving equipment unattended.

**Maintain the equipment and do it safely.** Let engine cool. Disconnect spark plug. Wear gloves when removing and sharpening blades. Remove grass build-up with scraper not bare hands. Don't forget to check tire pressure. Use only fuel and oil recommended by manufacturer.

### Who should attend a Defensive Driving Course?

- Employees who drive a lot of miles for the university
- Employees who drive a lot of passengers for the university
- Employees who need to improve their driving skills
- People who want to improve their driving skills

### Flying debris causing problems?



Some mowers like this one at UMMC have a "vertical discharge system" that throws debris down and under operator instead of out and to the right. Consider this feature during your next purchase to improve safety.

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