



# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY Newsletter

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the members of the EH&S division, I would like to extend my congratulations to everyone for a successful academic year 2022-23 and appreciate their hard work and efforts in keeping our community safe. It is always a pleasure to work with our community, to train our students on health and safety topics and to prepare them for future opportunities and challenges.

During this quarter, EH&S hosted an in-person meeting for the State University System of Florida (SUS) EH&S Directors at the UF campus for the first time. The goal of this meeting was to share safety programs, to discuss on-going issues and hot topics and to learn how we can establish a safety culture on our campuses. The group also toured the New Engineering Building, UF BAT Houses, and UF Hazardous Material Management facility.

In early May, the EH&S team collaborated with IFAS in providing educational support during their Farm CARES event and Community Day at the Suwannee River/North Florida IFAS facility. In addition, EH&S team members attended the Annual Meeting of FLACS (Florida Section of the ACS) Committee in Tampa to present our new Hydrofluoric Acid Safety Program. These were great opportunities to partner with UF extended campus and to share UF EH&S safety programs with other SUS universities.

As we start planning for October Safety Month events, we will be happy to share more details when they become available. As always, we are committed to supporting a safe working environment for our community and want to partner with you to help achieve your research and educational goals.

Enjoy your summer break with your family and friends and many thanks for all your support in keeping the UF community safe.

Regards,  
Shailendra Singh

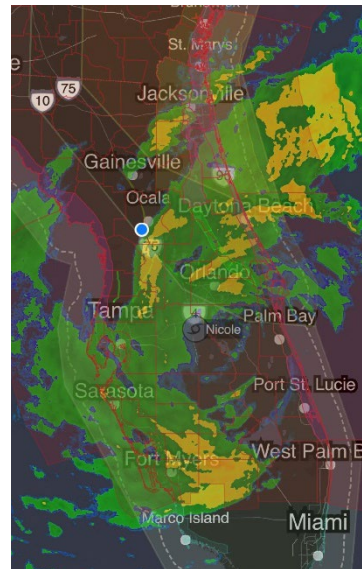


## HURRICANE SEASON 2023

It's that time of year – hurricane season officially began on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Departments should work with [Emergency Management](#) to review their individual preparedness plans.

In the event a storm impacts UF sites, here are some insurance and FEMA tips:

- Follow safety protocols mentioned on emergency management's website.
- Complete safety inspections and where possible, move valuable property out of harm's way.
- For any emergency preparations, keep track of employee OT hours worked (if any), including equipment and supplies used (e.g. sand bags, boarding windows, etc.)
- If there is any damage, take all reasonable measures to prevent further damage. Follow [Procurement](#) guidelines and utilize Quick Response contractors to make emergency repairs.
- For debris removal (trees, sand, silt) track employee hours, equipment and materials used.
- Notify EH&S Risk Management of any building or property damage so we can file insurance claims.



By following the above tips, we can help you recover faster should disaster strike. Click below for the latest hurricane information as well as additional resources to help you be prepared during this season.

[HURRICANE UPDATES](#)

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## ALLIGATOR AWARENESS

Recently, a large 8-foot alligator was seen holding up traffic while going across Gale Lemerand Drive. May and June is the peak of alligator season. During this time of the year, males are extremely protective of their territory. Please warn curious students and staff to stay away. While alligators can reach a speed of 20 mph in the water, on land they have been clocked with bursts of speeds up to 35 mph.



Please take safety precautions when walking around campus lakes, creeks or our conservation areas. If you see an alligator in public spaces, please keep your distance and contact EH&S Pest Management at 352-392-1591

[CONTACT PEST MANAGEMENT](#)

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## 5 WAYS TO AVOID BACK-UP ACCIDENTS

We are seeing a slight increase in claims where UF drivers are backing into other vehicles. These minor accidents are avoidable with a little extra caution:

- Know your blind spots. The larger the vehicle, the larger the blind spot. Conditions in a parking lot can change quickly – other vehicles may also be backing out or pedestrians may appear. Check your blind spots and mirrors continuously while backing up.
- Use a spotter for difficult situations. If you are parked in a congested area and have a passenger, use them as a spotter to stand behind the vehicle and direct you. If you are alone, make sure you walk around the vehicle and survey the area
- "Think twice, look twice." It's best not to rely solely on mirrors and cameras. Looking twice allows drivers to spot people, other vehicles, and objects that may be in the path or block your vision.
- Take your time and move slowly. This will allow pedestrians and other drivers to see you and stop or get to a safe distance. It also gives you plenty of time to stop if necessary.
- "10 Seconds of Safety." Minimize distractions (phone, radio, conversation) and pay full attention – just 10 seconds of focused concentration can help you back out safely and avoid an accident.

If involved in an accident, please contact either UFPD or local police (depending on if you are on/ off campus) to complete an accident investigation & incident report. In addition, EH&S will also need the department or person involved in the accident to complete a State of Florida automobile accident report form. Once completed it should be submitted to EH&S Risk Management. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact EH&S Risk Management at 352-392-1591.

**EH&S RISK MANAGEMENT-AUTO ACCIDENT FORM**

## SUMMER SAFETY & MINORS IN THE LAB

As summer has started, we are gearing up to host various programs involving minors in research areas/laboratories. Remember to always consult with UF's [Youth Compliance Services](#) prior to engaging in any University activities.

If you are a Principal Investigator that is planning to host a minor, we have a new checklist that can help you navigate the requirements [Minors In Research Labs Checklist](#).

Be aware that all the requirements must be met prior to allowing a minor to enter the research space.

Also, here are a few lab safety tips to remember...

- Review SOPs before you start your experiments.
- Use the summer to complete your lab safety training.
- Wear your PPE according to your lab hazards – Although it is tempting to wear sandals, you must wear close toed shoes in the laboratory.



- Refresh yourself about the location of emergency equipment in your lab (fire extinguisher, first aid kit, safety shower, and eyewash station).
- If you are working alone, make sure to read the working alone guidelines, and we recommend using the Gator Safe App (work alone).

**Remember...lab accidents do not take the summer off!** For more information, please contact EH&S Lab Safety at [labsafety@ehs.ufl.edu](mailto:labsafety@ehs.ufl.edu)

## MINORS AND VISITORS IN THE LAB

# GEAR UP GATOR!

As we mentioned in the previous issue of the newsletter, the minimum PPE for working in the lab includes **eye protection, gloves, and protective clothing** such as a lab coat. UF's PPE policy was recently updated to include a supplemental guide for labs and research spaces. Please take a moment to review the policy [found here](#).



Quite frequently, we are asked if eye protection is required in the laboratory. The answer is yes! Eye injuries at work are surprisingly common and expensive. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 20,000 eye injuries occur in the workplace each year. Injuries on the job often require one or more missed workdays for recovery. In fact, OSHA reports that workplace eye injuries cost an estimated \$300 million a year in lost productivity, medical treatment, and worker compensation.

Our eyes are particularly sensitive to chemicals, pathogens, and foreign objects. Even a short period of exposure can cause severe effects to the eyes or potentially transport harmful substances to other parts of the body causing further effects. Potential eye hazards include:

- projectiles (containers under pressure or exposed to high temperatures or cryogenics have the potential to generate projectiles),
- fine particles (cutting, grinding, sanding or blowing air can generate or lift fine particles),
- splashes and fumes (even simple cleaning products such as bleach can be extremely harmful to the eyes),
- radiation (such as UV, infrared, and lasers),
- exposure to biological agents and animal allergens.

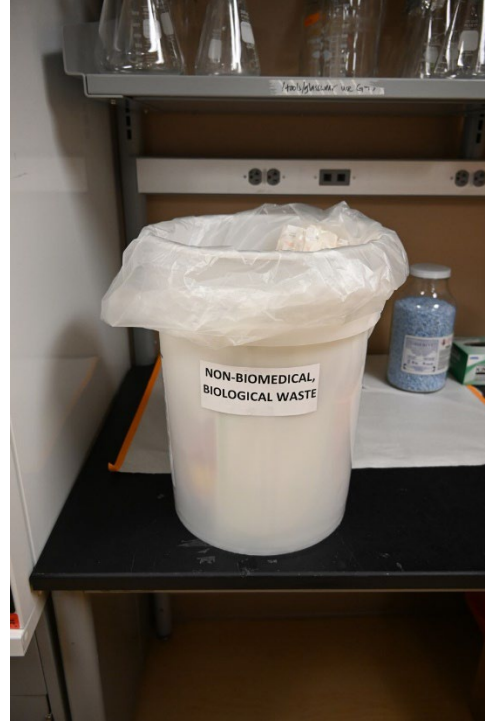
These hazards are found across all wet laboratories at UF and it is imperative that we implement appropriate control measures to protect ourselves. Experienced laboratory workers have the responsibility to mentor incoming students and lead by example. A strong safety culture is dependent on the commitment and contribution of all.

## NON-BIOMEDICAL & BIOLOGICAL WASTE

All labs are encouraged to minimize biomedical waste generation whenever possible. Many times, biological waste not classified as biomedical waste, ends up in the biomedical waste stream. This results in higher disposal costs for the institution and greater impacts on the environment as biomedical waste treatment is an energy intensive process.

Solid biological waste that does not pose a threat of infection to humans can be discarded in the regular trash or clean labware box **after steam inactivation**. **Always use a clear autoclave bag with no biohazard markings when collecting and treating your waste.** This waste stream should not be disposed as biomedical waste unless inactivation of the waste is not possible or if segregation of the waste from true biomedical waste is difficult.

Non-biomedical, biological waste includes non-infectious recombinant/synthetic nucleic acid wastes, microorganisms not infectious to humans (risk group 1 agents, including plant and animal pathogens), and presumed healthy animal products (excluding non-human primate). Like biomedical waste, liquid waste must be inactivated using an autoclave or bleach and can be poured down the drain following inactivation. Click below for a printable handout detailing non-biomedical, biological waste handling.



## NON-BIOMEDICAL & BIOLOGICAL WASTE HANDOUT

# NEW UPDATES TO LAB CLOSEOUT

To better serve our research community and provide useful information up front, we will be conducting lab closeout safety surveys as early as possible prior to the lab being vacated. This allows our personnel to meet one-on-one with a lab representative and provide guidance on items that need to be completed for a successful lab closeout. The process will be as follows:

- Lab staff should continue reporting upcoming closeouts using the existing Report a Lab Closeout form.
- Once the form is submitted, an EH&S representative will contact the lab within a week to schedule a lab closeout survey – there is no need to complete any items prior to survey.
- During the survey, the EH&S representative will walk through the lab offering guidance and answering questions about what items need to be completed.
- A safety survey report will be generated through Gator TRACS based on what is found in the lab. This survey report will serve as the lab's "to-do list" for a successful closeout.
- Throughout the following days/weeks, an EH&S representative will check in to verify the status of pending items. As items are completed, the actions in Gator TRACS can be closed.

- Once all items are closed, EH&S will update Gator TRACS and issue a final closeout completion notice.

The new lab closeout process will be implemented in the second half of June. As always, please continue reporting your lab closeouts at least 30 days in advance by submitting Report a Lab Closeout form.

[REPORT A LAB CLOSEOUT FORM](#)

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## TRAINING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Effective 05/18/2023, the Chemical Hygiene Plan training requirement is temporarily paused until a new version of the course is launched. This means that there is no need to take the Chemical Hygiene Plan training (EHS861) until the new version is launched in the Fall semester. Please note that all users will be required to take the updated version once it is live. We will issue an announcement at that time.

EH&S has scheduled additional Gator TRACS training sessions. These voluntary sessions are geared towards Principal Investigators and Lab Managers who need assistance on how to navigate the LATCH and Survey Findings modules in Gator TRACS. If interested, please register for the live training session in [myTraining](#) by searching the course code EHS883. Upcoming sessions:

- Wednesday, July 19th at 10am
- Thursday, August 17th at 3pm
- Friday, August 25th at 10am
- Tuesday, September 5th at 3pm
- Friday, September 15th at 10am

[MyTraining](#)

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## SPRING 2023 SUS EH&S DIRECTORS' MEETING

In late May, UF hosted an in-person meeting for the EH&S Directors from various members of the State University System of Florida (SUS). Representatives from FSU, FIU, Florida Poly, UM, UWF, and UCF attended this two-day event on May 25-26. The goal of these meetings is to share EH&S programs, to discuss on-going issues and hot topics, and to learn best safety practices from each other.



The group discussed important topics such as EH&S web platforms, program management, drone safety, branding and engagement, medical monitoring, risk

management audits, and much more. Our director, Dr. Shailendra Singh, took the lead in hosting the event and had some of our staff provide presentations for the rest of the members. John Rouse, EH&S Drone Coordinator, presented the new regulations on drones as well as some helpful tips for those operating drones. Erica Gonzaga, Associate Director of Research Services, presented the recent update on GatorTracs and how we are using it to manage various EH&S programs.

Always proud to show off our beautiful campus, during Day 2 of the conference, we took the committee members around campus on a tour and stopped at the New Engineering building, UF Bat Houses, and our Hazardous Materials Management facility. This was the University of Florida's first time hosting this meeting and we were thrilled to have everyone.

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## SAFETY REMINDERS

### **Are you closing, vacating, relocating, transferring, or renovating a laboratory?**

Notification to EH&S is required **thirty days (30) in advance**. Please [report lab closeout](#).

### **Are you planning to purchase lab equipment?**

Lab appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, 3D printers, heaters, and microwaves need prior approval from EH&S before being purchased. Please use the [Equipment Purchasing Approval Form](#) to submit requests.

### **Are you generating hazardous waste?**

Do not fill liquid waste containers completely to the top. **Over filling can be hazardous to the University students, employees, visitors, facilities, and the environment.** Please leave a small amount of head-space to allow for expansion of the liquid due to temperature changes (especially during transport).

- 20 L × 15 °C temp increase = as much as 400 mL volume increase for common solvents.
  - Best Practices – Leave a 5% void in cans and carboys.
  - Best Practices – Only fill 4 L bottles to shoulder.
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## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



[CONTACT](#)

### Erin Brewer

Insurance & Risk Specialist  
Occupational Safety and Risk Management

EH&S is turning the spotlight on Erin Brewer, our new Insurance and Risk Specialist.

Her job responsibilities consists of approving university events for EH&S, servicing UF's insurance policies, managing various claims, and training employees on the various coverages.

She comes to EH&S with several years of experience as a Licensed Commercial Agent, Account Admin and Claims Adjustor. She has a 220: FL PNC Agent License.

She loves spending time with her family and if she isn't listening to music, she's reading a book. She also loves to travel and trying new things.



[CONTACT](#)

### Chris Young

EH&S Coordinator I  
Lab Safety

We are thrilled to welcome Chris Young to the EH&S team.

As our EHS Coordinator I, Chris conducts lab safety surveys, provides support and assistance to UF labs, and coordinates EH&S's Hydrofluoric Acid Safety Program. He has a B.S. in Geography, Resource & Environmental Studies from Texas State University. He also has an MPH in Environmental & Occupational Health from USF.

Playing guitar and listening to music are some of Chris's favorite hobbies. He also loves cats and his wife.

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## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

**Thank you for your many years of service at UF!**

John Parker - 25 years

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### New Hires

Rajesh Bollam - OPS Fume Hood Technician

### Promotions



Jeremy Dickerson - *Radiation Safety Technician*  
Manuel Rojas - *OPS Fire Safety & Fume Hood  
Technician*

Marcus Cruger- *Building Inspector I, Radio  
Communications*  
Derek LaMontagne-*Hazard Materials Specialist II*

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**EHS.UFL.EDU**