

# THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER—JULY 2015



## CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes, *CO* can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. At lower levels of exposure, *CO* causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. The effects of *CO* exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure.

Unvented kerosene and gas space heaters; leaking chimneys and furnaces; back-drafting from furnaces, gas water heaters, wood stoves, and fireplaces; gas stoves; generators and other gasoline powered equipment; automobile exhaust from attached garages; and tobacco smoke. Incomplete oxidation during combustion in gas ranges and unvented gas or kerosene heaters may cause high concentrations of *CO* in indoor air. Worn or poorly adjusted and maintained combustion devices (e.g., boilers, furnaces) can be significant sources, or if the flue is improperly sized, blocked, disconnected, or is leaking. Auto, truck, or bus exhaust from attached garages, nearby roads, or parking areas can also be a source.

At low concentrations, fatigue in healthy people and chest pain in people with heart disease. At higher concentrations, impaired vision and coordination; headaches; dizziness; confusion; nausea. Can cause flu-like symptoms that clear up after leaving home. Fatal at very high concentrations. Acute effects are due to the formation of carboxyhemoglobin in the blood, which inhibits oxygen intake. At moderate concentrations, angina, impaired vision, and reduced brain function may result. At higher concentrations, *CO* exposure can be fatal.

Average levels in homes without gas stoves vary from 0.5 to 5 parts per million (ppm). Levels near properly adjusted gas stoves are often 5 to 15 ppm and those near poorly adjusted stoves may be 30 ppm or higher.

It is most important to be sure combustion equipment is maintained and properly adjusted. Vehicular use should be carefully managed adjacent to buildings and in vocational programs. Additional ventilation can be used as a temporary measure when high levels of *CO* are expected for short periods of time.

- Keep gas appliances properly adjusted.
- Consider purchasing a vented space heater when replacing an unvented one.
- Use proper fuel in kerosene space heaters.
- Install and use an exhaust fan vented to outdoors over gas stoves.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
- Choose properly sized wood stoves that are certified to meet EPA emission standards. Make certain that doors on all wood stoves fit tightly.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean, and tune-up central heating system (furnaces, flues, and chimneys) annually. Repair any leaks promptly.
- Do not idle the car inside garage.

### **ALERT: PUT GENERATORS OUTSIDE!!!**

Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

## TIPS FOR SAFE AND PEST-FREE GARDENING:

1. Slug trap: bury a small (ex. yogurt cup) container so the top emerges about 2" from the top of the soil level. Fill the container with beer. The slugs will fall for the intoxicating smell, and other "good" bugs will be spared.

2. Hang recycled aluminum like used foil or disposable pie tins in and around berry bushes to deter birds.

3. Insecticide: USDA recommendation: Mix one teaspoon of liquid dishwashing detergent with one cup of vegetable oil. Shake vigorously to emulsify and add to a quart of tap water. Use at 10-day intervals as an all-purpose spray for white flies, spider mites, aphids, and various insects on carrots, celery, cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, and others. We've used it on evergreens and other ornamentals. Note: Test on a single plant first, because it may cause tip burn. This is a contact insecticide, so spray mix directly on the pest.

4. Keep weeds away using recycled plastic, newspaper, or fabric as a natural weed block. This cuts down on backaches and those pesky weeds.



From Charlene Walthert

## KNOW YOUR LIMITS IN THE HEAT

Even being out for short periods of time in high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Monitor your activities and time in the sun to lower your risk for heat-related illness.

- If you're outside in hot weather for most of the day you'll need to make an effort to drink more fluids.
- Avoid drinking liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, especially in the heat.
- Take breaks often. Try to rest in shaded areas so that your body's thermostat will have a chance to recover. Stop working if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.
- Watch people who are at higher risk for heat-related illness, including infants and children up to four years of age; people 65 years of age or older; people who are overweight; people who push themselves too hard during work or exercise; and people who are physically ill or who take certain medications (i.e. for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation).
- Eat healthy foods to help keep you energized.

# PROTECT YOUR EYES

Here's a **SCARY FACT**: prolonged exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can lead to vision loss and blindness.

Yep, you read it right. Recent studies have shown that without proper eye protection, ultraviolet rays may cause serious eye conditions like cataracts and macular degeneration that can cause you to lose your sight.

UV rays aren't picky. They hurt everyone's eyes, regardless of age or gender. Even a single outing outside can do damage if your eyes aren't protected. These are the same rays that burn our skin and cause skin cancer, wrinkles. UV rays can burn the outer surface of our eyes, leading to complications later.

So when you're outside, don't just think about protecting your skin.

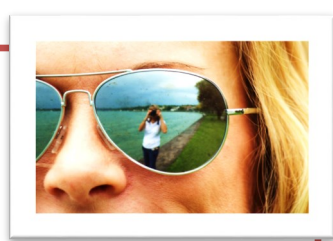
Protect your eyes too!

## UV: JUST THE FACTS

- ◇ UV levels are three times greater in summer than winter
- ◇ Sunlight reflected off of water, snow and pavement intensifies UV and makes it more dangerous
- ◇ 20% of cataract cases are due to UV rays
- ◇ 3.2 million go blind every year due to prolonged UV exposure

## HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

- ◇ **Protect Your Eyes!** Wear the right kind of sunglasses when going outside - even when it's overcast. The sun's rays can be just as damaging on a cloudy day.
- ◇ **Talk to Your Eye Care Professional:** All sunglasses don't provide UV protection. The color of the lenses has nothing to do with it - it's a function of the lens material or a treatment the lens has had. That's why some clear lenses can protect you, while some colored lenses can't!
- ◇ **Wear Sunglasses that block 100% of UV rays:** If you're not sure, have your Eye Care Professional measure the lenses for UV capability. It takes just a few seconds for complete peace of mind.
- ◇ **Don't Forget the Kids!** They need UV protection too! Have them wear proper sunglasses and hats, too. It's also smart to keep them out of the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.
- ◇ **Get Checked Yearly!** Early detection makes all the difference in recognizing, preventing and treating eye



## UV RADIATION CHECKLIST

If you can answer "yes" to one or more of the following questions, you could be at higher risk for harm to the eyes from UV radiation:

- ⇒ Do you spend a great deal of time outdoors?
- ⇒ Do you spend time skiing, mountain climbing or at the beach?
- ⇒ Do you use a sunlamp or tanning parlor?
- ⇒ Do you live in the mountains or the United States Sunbelt?
- ⇒ Are you a welder, medical technologist or do you work in the graphic arts or in the manufacture of electronic circuit boards?
- ⇒ Do you take prescription or over-the-counter drugs that can increase your sensitivity to UV radiation (check with your optometrist, pharmacist, or physician)?
- ⇒ Have you had cataract surgery in one or both eyes?

## RICE CREEK...



If you've never visited Rice Creek you're missing out on a beautiful and peaceful experience! The grounds surrounding the station include an herb garden and 300 acres of fields, forests, ponds and streams that are used for ecological research by faculty and students in formal course work and independent study projects. In addition to academic offerings, the field station provides public programs in nature education for groups and individuals, school aged to adult. Four nature trails, open to the public, provide opportunities for hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The Orange trail, about two miles in length, is the only trail open for bicycling. The trails pass through fields and woods in several stages of succession. Trail maps are available online and at the field station building. For more information visit: [http://www.oswego.edu/academics/opportunities/rice\\_creek\\_field\\_station/about.html](http://www.oswego.edu/academics/opportunities/rice_creek_field_station/about.html)

**Ergonomic Assessment:** Christine Body has been doing ergonomic assessments since 1996 and is available to do them here on campus. She can be reached at 312-2770 and would be happy to assist you with any questions or issues.

## SUMMER FIRE ALARM SYSTEM PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Annual fire alarm system inspection and testing will be performed again this summer by Simplex-Grinnell. Testing will begin in residence halls and continue in academic buildings.

Before each building is tested by Simplex Grinnell, our Electrical Safety department will be cleaning, and-if necessary repairing or replacing-detectors, horns, and strobes. The Electrical Safety staff will be assisted by Custodial staff and summer student workers. This cleaning is an important part of our fire alarm system preventive maintenance. There will be no audible alarm testing during the cleaning, but there may be some from the use of an air compressor during the process. Every effort will be taken to make the process as non-invasive to staff as possible.

After the cleaning of a building is complete, Simplex Grinnell technicians will inspect and test its fire alarm system. The initial testing will be silent and should not cause any issues for building occupants. When the silent testing is completed, audible alarm testing will need to be performed. Before any audible testing is performed, all occupants will be notified and the building will be posted.

Again, every effort will be made to make this very important process as easy on everyone as possible.

As at any other time if a fire alarm should sound, PLEASE treat it as a true emergency!

# GUIDE TO INK AND TONER CARTRIDGE RECYCLING

**MOST INK AND TONER CARTRIDGES CAN BE REFILLED AND REUSED! THEY SHOULD NEVER BE THROWN IN THE TRASH. PLEASE SEND THEM VIA CAMPUS MAIL TO EHS AT 110 LEE HALL, DROP THEM OFF, OR CALL OUR OFFICE FOR PICK UP AT X3157. FOR EVERYONE'S CONVENIENCE PLEASE DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE A HUGE PILE TO SEND! ALSO, THERE IS NO NEED TO USE A LOT OF TAPE TO CLOSE THE BOXES. WE HAVE TO OPEN THEM UP BEFORE SENDING THEM FOR RECYCLING. THANKS!**

## EXAMPLES OF RECYCLABLE CARTRIDGES TO SEND:



**DO NOT SEND US TONER TANKS OR TUBES. THEY ARE NOT ACCEPTED FOR REFILLING OR REUSING. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, RECYCLABLE AS PLASTIC. THEY MAY BE PLACED IN YOUR RECYCLE BIN.**

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT NOT TO SEND:



**DO NOT SEND: MAINTENANCE CARTRIDGES, TONER KITS, DRUM UNITS. THESE ITEMS ARE NOT REFILLABLE/ REUSABLE. SOME ARE RECYCLABLE AS PLASTIC AND MAY BE PLACED IN YOUR RECYCLE BIN. MOST, HOWEVER, ARE UNFORTUNATELY NOT RECYCLABLE AND MUST BE PLACED IN YOUR TRASH.**



## MARY WALKER HEALTH CENTER OFFERS:

- New York state booklets with information on how to quit and be successful with it
- OzQuits! publications for the college's Jan. 1 smoke-free/tobacco-free policy
- Tobacco cessation counseling; starting this summer, faculty and staff may call appointments for confidential counseling on kicking the tobacco habit
- Nicotine patches, gum and lozenges for (at this time) students
- Support through the Great American Smoke Out and Kick Butts events

For more information about these services, call (315) 312-4100

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OFFERS:

- Confidential employee assistance services
- Smoking-cessation workshops

For more information about these services, call 866-879-5591

## OSWEGO HEALTH OFFERS:

- Smoking cessation counseling done on an individual basis.
- To schedule an appointment, call (315) 349-5513.

## Tobacco Free CNY offers:

- Information for tobacco-free resources throughout Central New York.

Contact Integrated Community Planning: 315-343-2344 or Christina Wilson, Executive Director at [cwilson@cnymail.com](mailto:cwilson@cnymail.com)

## JULY WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a great prize (more like an OK prize, but-hey, it's a PRIZE!), complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to [lisa.drake@oswego.edu](mailto:lisa.drake@oswego.edu) OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for June was Lucille Broadwell. Look for: Carbon Monoxide, Odorless, Colorless, Toxic, Unvented, Exhaust, Generator, Slug Trap, Insecticide, Weeds, Heat Related Illness, Rapid Pulse, Headache, Dizziness, Nausea, Confusion, Ultraviolet, Eye Protection, Cataract, Sunglasses, Vision Loss, Blindness.

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### **OLIVER SAYS:** NEVER LEAVE YOUR PETS IN A PARKED CAR!!!

Not even for a minute. Not even with the car running and air conditioner on. On a warm day, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels. On an 85-degree day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within 10 minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. Your pet may suffer irreversible organ damage or die.