



# THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2017

Labor Day, an annual celebration of workers and their achievements, originated during one of American labor history's most dismal chapters. In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to eke out a basic living. Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as 5 or 6 toiled in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages. People of all ages, particularly the very poor and recent immigrants, often faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks.

As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture as the wellspring of American employment, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th century, grew more prominent and vocal. They began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay. Many of these events turned violent during this period, including the infamous Haymarket Riot of 1886, in which several Chicago policemen and workers were killed. Others gave rise to longstanding traditions: On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, holding the first Labor Day parade in U.S. history.

The idea of a "workingmen's holiday," celebrated on the first Monday in September, caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives.

On June 26, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide. To break the strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers. In the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. More than a century later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified.

Many credit Peter J. McGuire, cofounder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday. Labor Day is still celebrated in cities and towns across the United States with parades, picnics, barbecues, fireworks displays and other public gatherings. For many Americans, particularly children and young adults, it represents the end of the summer and the start of the back-to-school season.

## **FACILITIES SERVICES STAFF: WE NEED YOU!**

We want to be the best damn Facilities Services Department in the world! To help us reach that goal, three surveys will be going out to you very soon. Your participation in completing these surveys is VERY IMPORTANT so PLEASE complete the surveys!!! PLEASE NOTE that your responses will be completely anonymous-in other words NO ONE will know who they came from. Each survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. The surveys will be sent by e-mail.

- ⇒ The first survey will be sent out on September 1<sup>st</sup> and will ONLY go to Custodial staff.
- ⇒ The second survey will be sent out to ALL Facilities Services staff on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- ⇒ The third and final (we promise!) survey will be sent out to ALL Facilities Services staff on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**YOUR PARTICIPATION IS REALLY IMPORTANT!!! PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEYS!!!  
THANK YOU!!!**

# LIGHTNING SAFETY: MYTHS VS. FACTS

With 1,800 thunderstorms in progress at any given time on Earth, it's important to be able to sort out the myths from the facts when it comes to lightning safety. And keep in mind that the best lightning safety plan of all is to take shelter in a house or other structure, or a hard-topped fully enclosed vehicle during a storm: "When thunder roars, go indoors!"

## MYTH 1 - LIGHTNING NEVER STRIKES THE SAME PLACE TWICE

Fact: Lightning often strikes the same place repeatedly, especially if it's a tall, pointy, isolated object. The Empire State Building was once used as a lightning laboratory, because it's hit nearly 25 times per year, and has been known to have been hit up to a dozen times during a single storm.

## MYTH 2 - LIGHTNING ONLY STRIKES THE TALLEST OBJECTS

Fact: Lightning is indiscriminate and it can find you anywhere. Lightning hits the ground instead of trees, cars instead of nearby telephone poles, and parking lots instead of buildings.

## MYTH 3 - IN A THUNDERSTORM, IT'S OK TO GO UNDER A TREE TO STAY DRY

Fact: Sheltering under a tree is just about the worst thing you can do. If lightning does hit the tree, there's the chance that a "ground charge" will spread out from the tree in all directions. Being underneath a tree is the second leading cause of lightning casualties.

## MYTH 4 - IF YOU DON'T SEE CLOUDS OR RAIN, YOU'RE SAFE

Fact: Lightning can often strike more than three miles from the thunderstorm, far outside the rain or even the thunderstorm cloud. "Bolts from the Blue," though infrequent, can strike 10-15 miles from the thunderstorm. Anvil lightning can strike the ground over 50 miles from the thunderstorm, under extreme conditions.

## MYTH 5 - A CAR WITH RUBBER TIRES WILL PROTECT YOU FROM LIGHTNING

Fact: Most vehicles are safe because the metal roof and sides divert lightning around you. The rubber tires have little to do with protecting you. Keep in mind that convertibles, motorcycles, bikes, open shelled outdoor recreation vehicles, and cars with plastic or fiberglass shells offer no lightning protection at all.

## MYTH 6 - IF YOU'RE OUTSIDE IN A STORM, LIE FLAT ON THE GROUND

Fact: Lying flat on the ground makes you more vulnerable to electrocution, not less. Lightning generates potentially deadly electrical currents along the ground in all directions, which are more likely to reach you if you're lying down.

## MYTH 7 - IF YOU TOUCH A LIGHTNING VICTIM, YOU'LL BE ELECTROCUTED

Fact: The human body doesn't store electricity. It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid.

## MYTH 8 - WEARING METAL ON YOUR BODY ATTRACTS LIGHTNING

Fact: The presence of metal makes virtually no difference in determining where lightning will strike; height, pointy shape and isolation are the dominant factors. However, touching or being near long metal objects, such as a fence, can be unsafe when thunderstorms are nearby—if lightning does happen to hit one area of the fence, for example, the metal can conduct the electricity and electrocute you, even at a fairly long distance.

## MYTH 9 - A HOUSE WILL ALWAYS KEEP YOU SAFE FROM LIGHTNING

Fact: While a house is the safest place you can be during a storm, just going inside isn't enough. You must avoid any conducting path leading outside, such as corded telephones, electrical appliances, wires, TV cables, plumbing, metal doors or window frames, etc. Don't stand near a window to watch the lightning. An inside room is generally safe, but a home equipped with a professionally installed lightning protection system is the safest shelter available.

## MYTH 10 - SURGE SUPPRESSORS CAN PROTECT A HOME AGAINST LIGHTNING

Fact: Surge arresters and suppressors are important components of a complete lightning protection system, but can do nothing to protect a structure against a direct lightning strike. These items must be installed in conjunction with a lightning protection system to provide whole house protection.

# BACKPACKS 101

According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, more than 79 million students in the United States carry a backpack and an estimated 55 percent of them are carrying a backpack that is too heavy. That's more than 43 million students who may be doing damage to their bodies with heavy books, electronic devices, and other school supplies.

Incorrect wear of backpacks and book bags can also contribute to health problems including pain in the back, neck, and shoulders, or the development of poor posture. Making sure that your children wear their backpacks properly can help prevent pain and posture problems. Follow the seven backpack safety tips below to help your children wear their backpacks safely and correctly, and avoid over packing this school year.

## Tip #1: Start with a lightweight backpack.

Make sure the backpack is made of a lightweight but durable material.

## Tip #2: Make sure the shoulder straps are wide and padded.

Wide, padded straps provide support and prevent the straps from becoming too tight. Your child's straps should be snug, but not so tight that they cause discomfort.

## Tip #3: The back should also be padded.

Padding that sits against your child's back will provide additional support and prevent discomfort.

## Tip #4: Look for a backpack with a waist strap.

A waist strap holds the contents closer to your child's back, which can help him or her maintain balance.

## Tip #5: Multiple compartments are a plus.

If your child's backpack has multiple compartments, it will be easier to evenly distribute the weight of the items inside. The heaviest items should be packed low and toward the center of the bag.

## Tip #6: Both straps should be worn at all times.

Make sure your child is always wearing both straps. Wearing both straps can also help distribute the weight more evenly and prevent your child from leaning to one side, which can cause pain in the neck, back, or shoulders. It also makes losing his or her balance less likely.

## Tip #7: Do not overload!

Your child's backpack should weight no more than 15 percent of his or her total body weight. Anything more can force children to slouch or hunch to compensate for the extra weight. Remove any items that are unnecessary, and encourage your children to carry heavier items in their arms, if possible.

If your child complains of back pain or discomfort, be sure to take a look at what is in his or her backpack. Encourage your child to carry his or her backpack according to the steps above. Backpacks with wheels are also an option for children experiencing discomfort. If pain persists, it is recommended you follow up with your child's doctor.

## Ten Tips to Avoid Distractions While Driving

1. Fully focus on driving. Do not let anything divert your attention! Actively scan the road, use your mirrors and watch out for pedestrians and cyclists.
2. Store loose gear, possessions and other distractions that could roll around in the car, so you do not feel tempted to reach for them on the floor or the seat.
3. Make adjustments before you get underway. Address vehicle systems like your GPS, seats, mirrors, climate controls and sound systems before hitting the road. Decide on your route and check traffic conditions ahead of time.
4. Put your electronic distractions aside.
5. Snack smart. If possible, eat meals or snacks before or after your trip, not while driving. On the road, avoid messy foods that can be difficult to manage.
6. Secure children and pets before getting underway. If they need your attention, pull off the road safely to care for them. Reaching into the backseat can cause you to lose control of the vehicle.
7. Finish dressing and personal grooming at home - before you get on the road.
8. If you have passengers, enlist their help so you can focus safely on driving.
9. If another activity demands your attention, instead of trying to attempt it while driving, pull off the road and stop your vehicle in a safe place. To avoid temptation, power down or stow devices before heading out.
10. As a general rule, if you cannot devote your full attention to driving because of some other activity, it's a distraction. Take care of it before or after your trip, not while behind the wheel.

Source: AAA

### FROM DIANN JACKSON-ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AT RICE CREEK FIELD STATION

Ticks will remain active in our area until after there has been a hard frost this fall.

Ticks can be in grasses and woody areas on campus and in your back yards.  
Ticks can transmit Lyme disease bacteria.

To decrease your chance of getting a tick or missing one:

- \*wear repellent containing 20 to 30 % deet
- \*wear long pants and long sleeve shirts; tuck you pant legs into your socks
- \*wear closed shoes
- \*check daily for ticks on your body
- \*shower soon after being outdoors
- \*put your cloths in dryer on high heat for 60 minutes to kill any remaining ticks
- \*seek medical attention if you need assistance to safely removing a tick from your skin
- \*if you remove a tick quickly within 24 hours, then you can greatly reduce your chance of getting Lyme disease.
- \*seek medical attention immediately if you or get a fever or rash

**HAVE A SAFETY ISSUE OR CONCERN YOU'D LIKE TO REPORT? PLEASE CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE:**

#### CSEA Members

Fred Matteson-Plumbing  
Mark Sierson-Plumbing  
Brian Bateman-BTC  
Joe Scanlon-BTC  
Mike Flack-Custodial  
Donna Monette-Custodial  
Melana Perkins-Custodial  
Shirley McCarthy-Custodial  
Dan Hoefler-Electrical  
Jason Hrcirik-CHP  
Roy Ayotte-CHP  
Sharon Cromie-Secretary

#### Management Representatives

Eric Foertch-EHS  
Mary DePentu-Maintenance and Operations  
Christine Body-EHS

# SEPTEMBER 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 August was Howard Hanlon. Look for: Labor Day, Unsafe, Workers, Surveys, Participation, Thunderstorm, Lightning, Electrocute, Sheltering, Cloud, Rain, Victim, Conducting Path, Strike, Backpack, Straps, Heavy, Pain, Back, Neck, Shoulders, Focus, Mirrors, Distractions, Attention.

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"Most Interesting Dog" Calvin says...

"I don't always receive surveys in my e-mail, but when I do I fill them out and return them!"

Calvin urges all Facilities Services employees to be like him. Please participate! We need your input! It's important!

## DUTCHISM FOR SEPTEMBER

### EDUCATE

TO TEACH IS TO LEARN,  
TO LEARN IS TO GIVE,  
TO GIVE IS TO EARN,  
TO EARN IS TO LIVE.