Laboratory Safety Digest | January - June 2019

 Lab Safety News:

- **Fatal explosion in lab in Bengaluru, India**
- **National Council for Occupational Safety and Health report: the 12 most dangerous companies to work for in 2018.**
- **A decade after a fatal lab safety disaster, what have we learned?**

Iowa State University
Environmental Health and Safety:

**Recent laboratory accident on campus:**
Two graduate students suffered serious lacerations and exposure to tetrahydrofuran when a 500 mL glass flask overpressurized and burst. Despite profuse bleeding and chemical exposure, the students drove in a personal vehicle to the emergency room, where one student received ~20 stitches to cuts on his face, throat, ear, hands, and abdomen. The other student went home and self-treated a laceration to his forehead. One student was not wearing personal protective equipment, the other had on gloves and safety glasses.

**Some takeaways from this accident are:**
- Ensure all group members are trained on current, updated SOPs that contain safety/hazard information.
- Remind group members that appropriate PPE must be worn in the lab.
- Verify that all group members are aware of what to do in an emergency and how to seek medical treatment.

**Note:** When employees are injured while working, the medical treatment will be covered by the university.

Featuring:

**What does a Laboratory Safety Specialist do?**
We are your advocates and allies in doing safe research. We assist personnel to ensure labs are operating safely. This includes performing laboratory safety surveys, reviewing SOPs, certifying fume hoods, helping update chemical inventories, evaluating new research equipment, or just having a discussion and getting input from lab personnel about concerns in the lab.

**What is the biggest challenge to achieving better safety awareness and performance in an academic setting?**
I would say complacency due to the sometimes repetitive nature of research. A lot of times, doing the same routine experiment day in and out creates a feeling of false assurance or false security, often making people unaware of some potential danger, breach, or fail in the system. This may also include internal factors such as lack of sleep or stress.

**What do you wish others knew or understood about safety?**
Safety takes effort. As safety professionals, we are here to help you, not hinder you.

**If you could improve just one aspect of the Geo/Atm safety program, what would it be?**
I would like to see the Geology department have a set of safety checklists when conducting field work. The unpredictable environment makes foreseeing safety risks a unique challenge but by taking precautions ahead of time we can minimize safety risks.

**Have you been able to able to implement safety initiatives with success? Why they have been received so well?**
I revamped our shop safety program. All of our equipment now have plug locks which users need to check out the keys to gain access. This way no one is working alone or during late at night/on weekends. This makes it easier to monitor the condition of the equipment and get emergency help in case of an accident.

**What is the biggest challenge to achieving high safety awareness and performance in an academic setting?**
Getting researchers and students to slow down and think about the tasks at hand before rushing ahead. In my experience as both a student and staff, there has always been a strong emphasis placed on producing results. Consequently, I’ve seen safety become one of the first aspects to be set aside.