

# The Safety Net



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**Regular Pondering of the “What Ifs” is important by Karen Humphrey**

Incidents such as fires, hazardous materials spills, or exposures are—fortunately—rare occurrences. While this is a very good thing from the perspective of health & safety, it’s also a bit of a double-edged sword in terms of preparedness.

I remember in grade school, every month, we had a fire drill. Every month during the storm season, we would have a tornado drill. This gave us a chance to regularly practice what we would do if it ever really happened.

When I went to college, all that stopped. No more fire drills or tornado drills. No instructors in any of my classes walking us through different scenarios of what could happen and what to do if it did happen.

Now I work in a university, and I get to see things from the back end. There is emergency pre-planning at the administrative level, the first responders train and practice, and there are drills that test our readiness if something should happen on a grand scale.

But what I still don’t see is preparedness on the smaller scale. I don’t see a regular practice of people thinking “what if” and walking through how they would respond. And there are a lot of possible “what ifs” on a college campus.

I see a lot of laboratory spaces, and the “what ifs” there alone include things such as small and large spills, fires, explosions, chemical exposure, cuts, thermal burns—and the list goes on.

The materials are in place. The labs have first aid kits, spill kits, and other items of emergency equipment. Lab workers know where they are, they walk by them every day. But how many lab groups make it a regular part of their group meetings to talk through the various “what ifs”?

I’m not suggesting that every group needs to have a full-scale drill once a month—although if you did, it would be great!

What I’m suggesting instead is to make it a regular item on the meeting agenda, once every several weeks, to walk through a scenario of something that could go wrong, and how to respond to it. This gets everyone involved thinking about the “what ifs”, and it keeps the response fresher in the mind.

This isn’t a perfect solution. In the moment of an incident, basic physiology tells us that the stress hormones kick in and our higher brain functions kick out. This is why first responders drill and drill and drill some more, and drill in stressful situations, so that the response is so

ingrained that it becomes instinct and remains in place once that stress response kicks in.

But it is a start. It gets you thinking about what could happen and what to do if something did happen.

What we’re doing in the Department of EH&S is designing a poster that tells you what to do in various lab emergencies. We’re going to get them out in all the lab areas, so that in the moment of an incident, you have a very quick and visible reminder of what to do to respond. My recommendation is that everyone becomes so familiar with the location of those posters that they could find them practically blindfolded. This way, if an incident were to occur and you needed help remembering how to respond, it would be instinctual to refer to the poster.

One thing that I, personally, will be doing is talking with personnel I see during my lab inspections, and asking them what they would do if such-and-such happened. This will also help keep things fresh in their minds.

Taken together, all of this will help us to be prepared to respond to any “what ifs” that might occur.

*Karen Humphrey is the Chemical Hygiene Officer with the Department of EH&S.*

## OSHA's Expanded Notification Requirement Will Create "Teachable Moment"

*Press Release*— When OSHA's revised severe-injury reporting rule kicks in next year, OSHA Administrator Dr. David Michaels hopes the agency will be able to make inroads with a new set of employers.

"We will, for the first time, have discussions with employers at the moment workers are injured, and we think that's a teachable moment," Michaels said during a keynote address at the National Safety Council's 2014 Congress and Expo in San Diego. "We think that's a moment to ask the employer, 'OK, figure out what happened and what you're going to do to make sure this doesn't happen.'"

Under the revised rule - which takes effect Jan. 1, 2015 - employers will be required to notify OSHA of work-related in-patient hospitalizations, amputations or losses of an eye within 24 hours. Under the current rule, employers only are required to notify the agency if a worker is killed on the job, or if three or more workers are hospitalized.

During the National Safety Council's 2014 Congress and Expo in San Diego, Michaels asserted that the current rule doesn't provide OSHA "the information we need."

"We've had too many instances where we go into a workplace after a referral or a fatality and we've discovered that there were two or

three serious injuries that same year that we didn't know about," Michaels told reporters during an informal press conference after his keynote address. "So now we're going to be able to get in there after the first [serious injury], and we think that's a teachable moment."

Referencing earlier keynote addresses that emphasized the importance of personal responsibility in workplace safety, Michaels noted that "the focus on personal responsibility A) isn't useful and B) isn't the law."

"The law says employers have the responsibility to provide a safe workplace," Michaels said. "... What I don't want to see is the employer telling me [after a serious accident], 'Well, the guy wasn't wearing his fall protection,' or 'the woman wasn't wearing her hardhat,' because blaming it on the worker isn't going to work. That's not going to prevent the next one from occurring."

Regarding how OSHA will be able to leverage its limited resources to reach a new set of employers, Michaels told reporters, "It will be an interesting challenge."

"It means we have to rethink what we do, but we know that enforcement is only one of our tools," Michaels said. Noting that federal OSHA inspects 40,000 workplaces each year - out of 7 million business establishments - he

added that the agency needs to "find new ways to reach employers and get them to abate hazards."

While inspections might be warranted in some cases, Michaels said the agency will make an effort to connect employers with resources such as its onsite consultation program and the National Safety Council.

"Rather than inspect all of them, I think it will be much more effective to reach out to them," Michaels said.



### On The Lighter Side



**"If ever there was a good reason to practice safety rules, this is it!"**

Used with permission from USMRA

### Dear EH&S

Dear EH&S,

If I spill something in my workshop or lab, how do I know if it's considered a large spill or a small spill?

-Concerned

Dear Concerned,

We really wish that we could give you a quantifiable answer to that, but unfortunately the question is too complicated to be able to do that. There are several variables to consider when you spill something. What did you spill? How much did you spill? Where did you spill it? Every spill is different, unless you repeatedly spill the same material in the same amount and in the same location—and if

that happens, you might want to take a look at your process.

The place to start is with what you spilled. Is it corrosive, toxic, flammable, biohazardous, or radioactive? The characteristics of the material will play a large part in determining the best response to the spill.

Always know what you're handling before you handle it. This way, you'll know if you have to get out of the area, or if you can clean it up yourself.

And if you ever have any doubts, leave the area and call for assistance.

We'll be rolling out posters soon that will give additional guidance on spills and other possible incidents.

## In Safety, There's One Thing We Control 100% of the Time by Brent Senette

*"Right is right even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it."*

The quote above - by William Penn - is a favorite of mine. It speaks to me of the personal accountability and courage it takes for us, as individuals, to do the right things in life - no matter how difficult that might be, because that's 100 percent within our control 100 percent of the time.

As safety leaders, we take ownership for engaging, inspiring and motivating others to work safely. The foundation for these "outward-reaching" actions, however, is built upon the bedrock of the "inward-looking" attributes of personal accountability and courage - the commitment we make to ourselves, as individuals, to practice safe work behaviors and do the right thing ... even if no one is watching (personal accountability) and no matter who or how many are watching (personal courage).

Those who "walk the talk" when no one is watching and irrespective of who is watching are the most credible, unassailable, unimpeachable safety leaders, and those who work with them and for them (who can spot a "fake" a mile away) take them for the "real meal deal," listen to what they have to say and emulate what they do.

It's not easy for individuals to meet the personal accountability and courage standard 100 percent of the time. If we're honest with ourselves and others, we might admit that we all "fall off the wagon" periodically. Is there any

magic that will keep us "on the wagon and out of the ruts" a greater percentage of the time?

While it might not be magic, I propose that a daily, early-morning reaffirmation of the "inward-looking" attributes of personal accountability and courage can help. It's a way to stare down that apparition looming before us in the mirror - puffy eyes, no makeup, "dragon breath" and stifled yawns all notwithstanding - and telling the man or woman staring back that you will do the right thing today whether you're working alone, alongside your boss or in a work crew.

I think safety leaders are like decathlon athletes. In the same way that a decathlete hones specialized skills (running, hurdling, jumping, vaulting, throwing, etc.) on a base of physical strength and speed, the safety leader assembles a specialized skill set (communication, empathic listening, coaching, setting clear expectations, recognizing positive behaviors, taking responsibility for safety, resolving conflict, building trust, etc.) on a base of personal accountability and courage.

In both cases, the more robust the base, the better the overall performance and outcomes.

*Used with permission from EHS Today.*  
<http://ehstoday.com/blog/safety-there-s-one-thing-we-control-100-percent-time>

### Web Bytes

Based on user feedback, a couple of minor tweaks have been made to the newly remodeled EH&S website.

First, under "Programs, Guidelines, & Services", the "General Safety" category has been split up into two categories. The original category of "General Safety" remains, and the focus of this category is now focused on issues pertaining to students and also to health and safety issues that are not governed under an OSHA workplace regulation.

A new category has been made, entitled "Occupational Safety & Health". Items under this category are regulated by one or more OSHA workplace standards. This is the category to visit if you want information on:

- Exposure Control Plan (Bloodborne Pathogens)
- Hazard Communication Program
- Hearing Conservation Program
- Hot Work Program
- Red Tag Permit Program
- Respiratory Protection Program

Also in response to feedback about the website, we have made training information easier to locate. The training link has now been put in the navigation bar on the website, meaning it can be accessed from the front page of the website, or any other page located on the site.

### Newsletter Going Semesterly

The decision has been made to take *The Safety Net* from a monthly newsletter, published 10 months of the year, to one that is released once a semester during the spring, summer, and fall semesters.

This change is taking effect immediately, and you can expect the next issue of this newsletter to appear in January/February of 2015.

The Department of Environmental, Health & Safety  
wishes everyone a safe and

**Happy Halloween**



## Did You Know?

According to an analysis of more than four million records in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) from 1990 – 2010 for children 0-18 years of age on October 31:

▶ One hundred and fifteen child pedestrian fatalities occurred on Halloween over the 21 years of our analysis. That is an average of 5.5 fatalities each year on October 31, which is more than double the average number of 2.6 fatalities for other days.

▶ Nearly one-fourth (26 out of 115) of accidents occurred from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Over 60% of the accidents occurred in the 4-hour period from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

▶ Over 70% of the accidents occurred away from an intersection or crosswalk.

▶ Most of the fatalities occurred with children ages 12-15 (32% of all child fatalities), followed by children ages 5-8 (23%).

▶ Young drivers ages 15-25 accounted for nearly one-third of all fatal accidents involving child pedestrians on Halloween.

▶ Drivers ages 36-40 and 61-65 were involved in the fewest child pedestrian fatalities on Halloween. Together, these age groups accounted for nine child pedestrian fatalities (8%) in the 21 years of the study.

▶ Each of the last six years of the study (2005 – 2010) has seen Halloween child fatalities below the 21 year average of 5.5.

## Bringing Safety Home: Halloween Safety

Here are some important Halloween safety tips that every parent should know:

- Purchase or make Halloween costumes from flame-resistant materials.
- Pick brightly colored costumes or add your own reflective tape so motorists can see them.
- Attach your child's name, address, and phone number somewhere inside the costume.
- An adult should always accompany children under age 12.
- To avoid tripping, make sure your child's costume is not too long, and that shoes are the proper size.
- Use washable face paint instead of masks so your child's vision isn't compromised.
- Plan the route your children are going to take, especially if they're going out unsupervised. They should go in a group.
- Teach your children never to respond to a driver or pedestrian that calls out to them.
- Provide your children with a healthy meal ahead of time, so they don't get hungry before returning home.
- Make sure your children don't eat any candy or food without checking with you first.
- Keep your walkway free of debris so that children coming to your house won't trip or fall. • Keep your pets away from the front door so they won't scare trick-or-treaters.
- Tell your children not to go to homes with barking, jumping dogs and not to approach any stray animals.
- Make sure your children have flashlights, especially if they're staying out after dark.
- Establish an appropriate curfew for children to return home.
- Make sure your children have change for a phone call and know their phone number.
- Don't let young children carve pumpkins. Get them involved by drawing the outlines before you cut them out as well as helping with other decorations.
- Don't hand out candy that could be a possible choking hazard to younger children.
- Teach your children to stay on the sidewalks and cross only at corners.
- Teach your children to look, listen and be aware of cars not stopping at corners.
- Teach your children to only go to houses with porch lights on and to never enter anyone's house.

Source: National Safety Council

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### Current Live Training Schedule:

<http://www.baylor.edu/ehs/index.php?id=98325>

### Training Matrix:

<http://www.baylor.edu/ehs/doc.php/203191.pdf>

Online trainings available through Blackboard

"The Safety Net" is published by the Department of Environmental Health & Safety and intended to share information with the Baylor community, promote transparency within the university's safety program, and encourage the continued development of a culture of safety among university employees and students.

Comments, questions, and ideas for future stories are welcomed. Email: [ehs@baylor.edu](mailto:ehs@baylor.edu)