

### Complete Safety Survey Before January 31.

All employees must complete the Safety Survey on NetLearning before the end of January.

The survey is used to evaluate employees know of basic safety practices and to demonstrate compliance with JCAHO standards.

### EPA Rule Promotes Mercury Recovery

Call Clinical Engineering, 3-6383, or Environmental Management, 3-6280, before disposing of or surplussing any equipment that contains mercury.

In August 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classified mercury-containing equipment as universal waste. "Universal waste" is a term used to describe certain commonly generated hazardous wastes.

Old thermometers and blood pressure units are among the most common mercury-containing equipment in hospitals.

## You have a "Right to Know" *and* Understand

Safety rules don't usually have nicknames. OSHA's Hazard Communication standard is an exception. It's often referred to as the "Right to Know" law. That's because its purpose is to make sure that employees know about the hazards of the chemicals in their workplaces.

Of course, just knowing that a hazard exists isn't enough. The "Right to Know" law also requires employers to provide workers with the information and training that they need to protect themselves from chemical hazards.

Under the law, employers must ensure that their employees are aware of their right to know and understand how to get the information that they need.

UK Hospital has a written hazard communication program, outlined in Hospital Policy 10-11. All employees must be familiar with this program and their roles and responsibilities.

You're probably already familiar with two key components of the "Right to Know" law: container labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS). They come with many of the cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilizing agents that we use, since many of these products are hazardous. They also come with certain drugs and procedural supplies.

The manufacturer's container label comes with written and, often, graphic warnings. The Hospital also requires that the "diamond" sticker be posted in areas where hazardous chemicals are used or stored. This color- and number-coded label is designed to warn users about the chemical's flammability (red), health (blue), reactivity (yellow), and special (white) hazards and to rate those hazards on a 0-4 scale—"0" denoting minimal hazard and "4" denoting extreme hazard.

While the labels are designed to give you general information about what could go wrong when you use a chemical, the MSDS are provided for you to reference when you need to know specific information and specific precautions.

For example, a "4" in the blue diamond on the chemical label tells you that a substance is highly toxic and should prompt you to get specific information about how that chemical could affect you and what measures you must take to prevent exposure.



## Consult Safety Officer Before Creating Storage Area

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has strict standards for storage areas.

That means that you can't just use any vacant room or other space to store items.

The standards have to do with square footage of the room, door hardware, rated walls, and combustibility of the materials.

That's why you have to consult the Hospital Safety Officer before creating a storage area out of available space.

## Security Consultant on site January 17-19

Fred Roll, a nationally-known healthcare security consultant will be evaluating the hospital's security systems, policies, and practices next week.

Roll will be touring the hospital and meeting with leaders in security-sensitive areas to make specific recommendations for improving current practices and planning for security in the new patient care facility.

## "Right to Know" (Continued from page 1.)

That information is available in the MSDS. MSDS for the chemicals found in your work area are filed in your Hazard Communication Manual or are available online at the Hospital Safety website, [www.hosp.uky.edu/hospsafety](http://www.hosp.uky.edu/hospsafety).

Unfortunately, MSDS often are written in very technical language and, as a result, are difficult to understand. That's important to remember.

The law explicitly states that the information must be presented to the employee in a way that makes it clear. And you're the judge of what's clear.

Your manager or supervisor must give you information about the risk and hazards, routes of exposure, signs and symptoms of exposure, and ways to protect yourself in the language and terms you understand.

Once you know and understand the potential problems involved in using the chemical, you need to know how to avoid harm. In a hospital setting, personal protective equipment (PPE)—gloves, gowns or aprons, goggles, or respirators—often is the front-line defense against exposure. Make sure that your supervisor provides you with the right PPE for the job and the chemicals.

PPE isn't the only defense against chemical hazards. Appropriate ventilation, storage, and handling and disposal procedures are also essential to your protection.

So ask about anything that's unclear. Ask and keep asking until it becomes clear. Then use what you know.

With rights come responsibilities. That's the second part of the "Right to Know" law. You are required to use the information, training, procedures and PPE provided by your employers whenever you work with hazardous chemicals.

## NIOSH Alert Warns About Hazardous Drugs

In 2004, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) issued an alert designed to increase awareness among health care workers about the health risks posed to them by some drugs. The alert contained five recommendations for health care.

1. Hospitals should have written policies for all phases of handling hazardous drugs.
2. Hospitals should seek formal input from employees who handle these drugs.
3. Employees should receive guidance documents, MSDS, and training.
4. Hospital must implement proper controls to reduce the risk of employee exposure. Employees should utilize these controls.
5. Syringes and IV sets used for preparing and administering these drugs should have Luer-lok fittings to reduce the risk of needlesticks.