

Safety Tips:

Risk Managing Known Hazards

In an ideal world, every hazard would be addressed and corrected immediately upon discovery. Unfortunately, we live in the real, public entity world, where budgets are limited, resources are stretched thin, and correcting known hazards is an increasingly steep, uphill battle. While many insurance policies and/or JPAs may have restricted coverage for losses resulting from known hazards that you fail to mitigate, the truth is that some known hazards cannot be corrected in a timely manner, while others, due to their design and inherent nature cannot be corrected at all. These situations call for the fine art of managing the known hazard, and this bulletin explores some techniques to consider:



- **Restrict access as much as possible** – If the hazard cannot be corrected due to lack of funds or simply because of its design, the next best solution is to minimize exposure to it by physically guarding it. Place a large piece of wood over that hole in the grass. Put caution tape or temporary fencing up around the wind-damaged tree. Use both caution tape and a piece of wood to restrict access to the cracked slide. Put a lock around the plug on the defective table saw. These are not permanent solutions of course, just very large band-aids that cover up the hazard until it can be repaired. A word of caution when considering this technique: be careful not to create a new hazard while trying to guard against the original hazard, such as using barbed wire to guard access to a broken playground slide.
- **Bring attention to the hazard** – If the hazard cannot be physically guarded, the next best solution is to bring awareness to it. If there is a large crack (or more like a few dozen large cracks) in a sidewalk, put cones and caution tape around them or paint them bright yellow. Do you have a known confined space that you cannot eliminate? Post a sign advising, “Warning – Confined Space Area - No Unauthorized Entry!” Even if a repair is scheduled for the following week, bring awareness to the hazard immediately, so people will have a reasonable opportunity and advanced warning to avoid it. This approach strengthens defense against any future claims.
- **Have a written plan of attack** – When all else fails, draft a prioritized plan of action that spells out the who, what, where, and when regarding how the hazard will be corrected, indicating specifically what conditions are required to initiate the plan, or what is currently preventing you from correcting the hazard (i.e., when funds become available, when school is out of session, when weather improves, etc.). This one probably won’t keep you out of the hot seat, but it should at least demonstrate that you are not being negligent, which also strengthens your claims defense.

While correcting a known hazard is always the best answer, using any (or ideally all) of these suggested alternatives is better than doing nothing at all. Manage each hazard as best as possible until it can be corrected, and you will be making lemonade out of your office full of lemons.

from Keenan & Associates Loss Control Bulletin • March 2013

Meeting Schedules 2013/2014

Risk Management Committee Meetings

Mar. 6, 2014 May 1, 2014

All meetings will start at noon and will be held at the Humboldt County Office - Annex

Emergency Preparedness Meetings

May 15, 2014

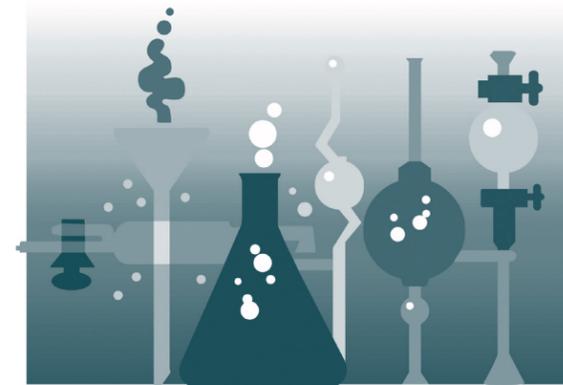
All meetings will be from 1:30 - 3:00 pm and will be held at the Humboldt County Office - Annex

Lead/Supervisor Maintenance Meetings

Feb. 6, 2014 May 8, 2014

All meetings will start at noon and will be held at the Humboldt County Office - Madrone

When is the last time you looked at your school science lab for safety?



8 Violations for School in Wake of Lab Fire

Fire Department investigators have cited Beacon High School in Manhattan for eight violations, finding that dangerous chemicals were being stored unsafely and that safety equipment and practices were lacking in at least three rooms. One was the makeshift lab where two students were engulfed in flames last week when a chemistry demonstration went horribly awry.

The department gave the school, which is on the Upper West Side, 10 days to correct some of the violation of fire and building codes, and 30 days for others. But it did not issue a “cease and desist” order, which could have closed the teaching labs, James Long, a Fire Department spokesman, said on Wednesday.

The state Labor Department is also investigating the accident and its context, state officials said, because regulations require safety equipment like chemical fume hoods when teachers handle potentially explosive flammable liquids and toxic chemicals in the workplace. There was none in Room 317, a “science demo room,” where Alonzo Yanes, 16, was badly burned when fumes from the methanol used by a teacher to burn different substances ignited. Alonzo remained in critical condition on Wednesday in the burn unit of New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. The other student suffered relatively minor burns.

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focus

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The Fire Department violations, issued to the principal, Ruth Lacey, also focused on the chemical storage room, Room 331; the school was ordered to immediately reduce the supply of hazardous chemicals to the amounts allowed by law, including no more than 15 gallons of flammable liquids and no more than five pounds of toxic substances. In a formal science laboratory, Room 321, the school was ordered to provide a safety shower and eye wash for decontamination, and to show that a chemical fume hood there was being tested annually for safe ventilation of dangerous fumes.



Devon Puglia, a spokesman for the city Education Department, said it was working closely with the Fire Department to correct the violations as soon as possible.

Science safety experts say that the deficiencies found at Beacon are widespread in American Schools, and that accidents have maimed teachers and student keep happening because of systemic shortcomings.

"I've inspected hundreds of thousands of school laboratories and there are problems everywhere with them," said James A. Kaufman, founder and president of Laboratory Safety Institute, a national nonprofit educational organization, who has served as a an expert witness in personal injury suits in which schools have to pay millions of dollars for similar accidents. "The kinds of problems that the Fire Department found at the Beacon school are the tip of the iceberg."



Like all but seven states, he noted, New York does not make lab safety education part of the written requirement for science teacher certification, so many teachers are not even aware of the hazards or the safety regulations. Though surveys find that lab accident rates are 10 to 100 times higher in schools than in industry, the scope to the problem has been obscure, he said, because there is no requirement that lab injuries or even fatalities are reported to a central database.

Jonathan Burman, a spokesman for the state Education Department, which certifies science teachers, said safety information was most likely already included in science teachers' coursework. By state law, local districts have sole responsibility for school curriculum, including science experiments, he said.

A federal chemical safety agency last month issued a video warning of the dangers of the same popular demonstration, known as the rainbow or the flame test that injured the Beacon Students. But Mr. Burman said the state's science education officials were not among the 60,000 subscribers who received the warning from the agency, the United States Chemical Safety Board. Asked whether the department had recommendations to make in light of the fire code violations, he wrote: "We would remind teachers that experiments which utilize flammable or explosive gasses should always be conducted under appropriate fume hoods. We would also remind them of the need to comply with all building and fire codes."

By Nina Bernstein • The New York Times • January 8, 2014

Update: Globally Harmonized System (GHS) Hazard Communication Standards

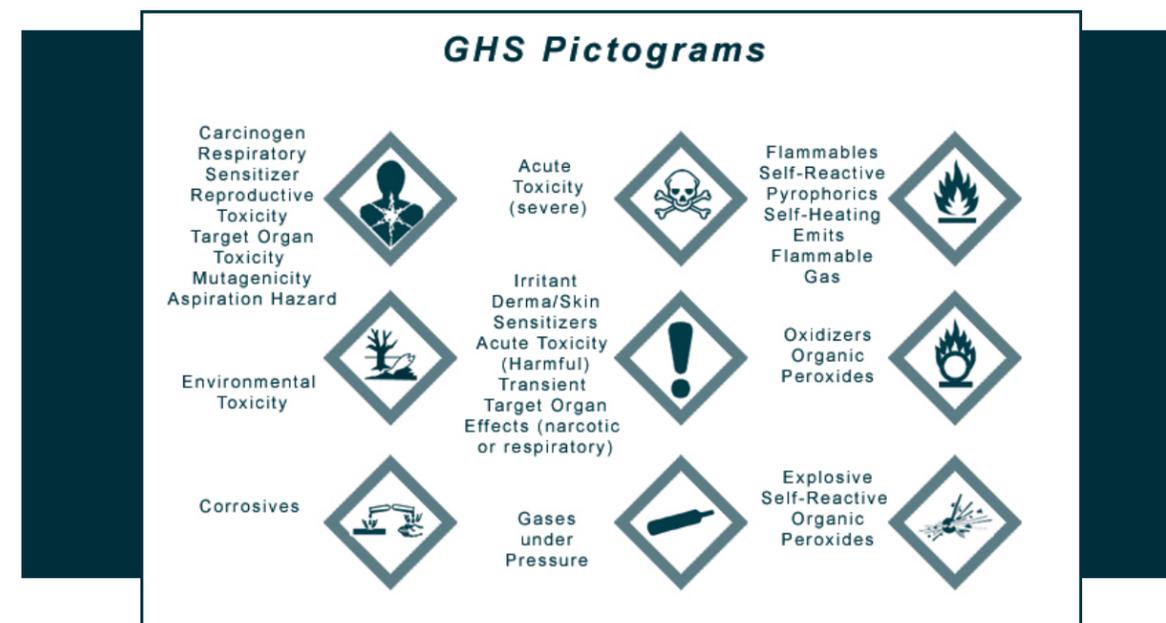
In March of 2012, the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) published an update to the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to align with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS) originally mandated by the United Nations in 2003. The mandate attempts to standardize chemical classification and labeling across the globe.

On May 6, 2013, The California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) adopted the regulation references to the revised OSHA standard and included additional references to the California regulations to maintain compliance with existing state laws. The California standard is found in CCR T8 §5194.

MAJOR CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS

The three major areas of change are in hazard classification, labels and safety data sheets:

- **Hazard classification** – The definitions of hazard have been changed to provide specific criteria for classification of health and physical hazards, as well as classification of mixtures. These specific criteria will help to ensure that evaluations of hazardous effects are consistent across manufacturers, and that labels and safety data sheets are more accurate as a result.
- **Labels** – Chemical manufacturers and importers will be required to provide a label that includes a harmonized signal word, pictogram, and hazard statement for each hazard class and category. Precautionary statements must also be provided. (A pictogram chart is included on page two of this document.)
- **Safety Data Sheets** – Safety data sheets will now have a specified 16 section format.



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The new training is available via Keenan's online training, orNCSIG's Risk Manager can provide the training