March 2009 SCS Safety Newsletter

Topics in this issue:

• Tornadoes
• Complicated Chemical Spills

Tornadoes:

The arrival of spring also means the beginning of tornado season in east central Illinois. The U of I campus is equipped with an alarm system to warn of impending tornadoes. When the tornado alarm has sounded, or there are other indications of a tornado, move to the basement of the building or connecting tunnels. If it is not possible to move from currently occupied space before a tornado strikes; move away from the windows and crouch beneath a desk or sturdy table. The interior corridors of the building are also reasonably safe places to be. Please note tornado sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of each month at 10am.

Complicated Chemical Spills:

The Division of Research Safety defines two types of chemical spills: complicated and simple. Complicated spills require calling 9-911 from campus phones or 911 from all other phones. Simple spills can be cleaned up by lab occupants and do not require calling 9-911 or 911. Simple spill clean up will be covered in next month’s newsletter.

A spill is complicated if:

• A person is injured or
• The identity of the chemical spilled is unknown or
• More than one chemical is involved or
• The chemical is highly toxic, highly flammable or highly reactive or
• The spill occurs in a public space such as a door way or corridor or
• The spill has potential to spread to other parts of the building such as through the ventilation system or
• The cleanup procedures are not known or appropriate materials to cleanup the spill are not available or
• The cleanup requires a respirator to be worn and no personnel have been fit tested or trained to use a respirator or
• The spill may endanger the environment such as reaching waterways, storm sewers or outside ground

Follow these steps to respond to a complicated chemical spill:

1. Evacuate the affected area and alert others nearby to evacuate. Pull the fire alarm pull if the spill warrants building evacuation.
2. If possible, close doors and windows. Close doors and windows only if it is safe to do so as you evacuate the area. Open doors/windows can cause fumes/vapors to travel into the hallway or outside.
3. Call 9-911 from campus phones or 911 from all other phones.

Information to provide when calling 9-911 or 911:

• Name and spelling of chemical spilled
• Quantity spilled or released
• Location of the spill/incident (building name and room number)
• If anyone is injured or splashed with the chemical
• If a fire or explosion is involved
• Your name and phone number

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Is there a safety topic you would like covered in a future newsletter? Have any comments or suggestions? Send an email to eduvall@uiuc.edu

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