Being Prepared for Unexpected Absences

During the heat of the summer the thought of winter weather and vacations seemed far away for most Columbians. Now we are preparing for the end of the fall semester and a holiday break where students and employees often get to take a much needed vacation. There are other reasons, however, that force people away from their work. Winter weather may force people to remain home due to travel concerns or cars that refuse to start. Unexpected school closings require parents to remain home with their kids. Illness can affect employees and family members alike, causing unexpected changes to work schedules.

These unexpected events affect all employees, but they have some added significance for those working in labs. Here are some things for laboratory personnel to consider when preparing for unexpected absences.

- When possible, do not leave experiments running unattended.
- Make sure incubators requiring special gases have an adequate supply of gas to accommodate being left alone for more than one day.
- Make sure other qualified individuals in your lab are familiar with equipment and procedures and are able to handle any issues that may arise while you are away. This includes maintaining watering schedules for plants, special feeding schedules for animals, and maintaining approved cage occupancy levels.
- Label all containers correctly so that the materials can be easily identified in your absence.
- If you are expecting a shipment or have a scheduled material pick up, make arrangements to have an appropriate person oversee these. This is especially important if a shipment contains radioactive materials or the material requires special handling, such as refrigeration, once it has been delivered.

Another option many parents consider is bringing their children into work on days when schools are closed. The University of Missouri has a policy on visitors to the workplace. (http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/fa/management/risk/guidelines-visitors) According to this policy “There are many workplaces where hazardous materials or equipment are located or where hazardous operations are conducted. These include laboratories, shops, farms, animal care facilities and power plants. It is therefore necessary to restrict access to these areas for visitors, especially children and minors.”

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Recognizing a Heart Attack

There are two major cardiac emergencies that are discussed in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid training. These are a heart attack and cardiac arrest. During a heart attack the heart is still beating but having trouble doing so. During cardiac arrest the heart has stopped beating. Obviously a heart attack can lead to cardiac arrest. However, it is important to remember that these two illnesses are different and require different emergency response. This article will primarily discuss how to recognize and respond to a person experiencing a heart attack.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Because of this, we are all affected by heart disease, either by ourselves or through our family and friends. Most people recognize obvious signals such as chest discomfort, including pressure, squeezing, a feeling of fullness, or pain. Pain may be constant or may go away and come back. Other signals include discomfort or numbness in one or both arms, the abdomen, neck, back or jaw. The person may be experiencing shortness of breath, sweating, feeling light headed or may be nauseous. It is important to understand that a person experience a heart attack may feel many or only a few of these symptoms. Women, people who are diabetic, or the elderly may experience less typical signs of a heart attack.

No matter who the person is, if they are experiencing an uncomfortable feeling in the chest then you should consider they are having a heart attack.

The American Heart Association suggests the following steps if a person is showing signs of a possible heart attack.

- Make sure the person stays calm and rests.
- Phone or have someone phone 9-1-1.
- Ask someone to get a first aid kit and an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) if available.
- If the person has no allergy to aspirin, no serious bleeding, and no signs of stroke, give them an aspirin (either 2 low-dose aspirin or 1 regular). Have the person chew the medicine and swallow it.
- If the person becomes unconscious, collapses suddenly and shows no signs of life, they may have gone into cardiac arrest. At this point begin CPR. If you do not know how to give full CPR, give hands only CPR. If you are alone, make sure 9-1-1 has been called first if the person is an adult and you need to begin CPR.

Hands only CPR consists of placing one of your hands in the center of the person’s chest and packing your other hand over it. Push down Hard And Fast at a rate of 100 compressions/minute until help arrives. More information on hands only CPR can be found at http://www.handsonlycpr.org/handson/

Information on full CPR/AED and First Aid classes can be found at http://ehs.missouri.edu/train/cpr.html
Being Prepared for Unexpected Absences Cont.

The policy specifically discusses children in the workplace, including emergency situations. “In the event of an emergency, and if there are no other alternatives, parent employees may have children present in the workplace for brief periods of time provided the parent secures the immediate supervisor’s prior approval. Such arrangements are only to be temporary in nature and may be granted only in circumstances where safety issues (such as stairs and stairwells, automatically closing doors, open windows, office machines, etc.) have been satisfactorily addressed. Parent employees should not leave such child(ren) in the custody of another University employee, even for brief periods of time. This exception for emergencies is not applicable to hazardous areas.”

Hazardous areas are defined as ones where the following are present: chemicals or radioactive materials in use or storage, biological or infectious hazards, live animals, construction or renovation activities, utility equipment spaces, tunnels, rooftops, mechanical rooms, heavy machinery, high noise levels, electrical hazards, and other areas deemed hazardous by the host department. Because most laboratories on campus have one or more of the above hazards present, they should be considered hazardous areas and not appropriate for children. It is important to have a personal plan of action to take that does not include bringing children into the workplace, especially into a laboratory, when they are out of school and in need of supervision.

From Everyone at Environmental Health and Safety, Have a Safe and Happy Winter Break!
Storm Water Sewer Identification and Use

If you have walked around downtown Columbia MO recently you may have noticed several sewers decorated with brightly colored murals. This art education was meant to draw attention to the storm sewer inlets and to remind people to not throw items into these sewers. The water that enters these inlets is not treated before it travels into local waterways such as the Flat Branch or Hinkson Creek.

Although not part of the aforementioned art project, campus storm water sewer inlets are usually indicated by a blue and green circular tile containing a fish and the words “No Dumping, Drains to Stream”. It is important to remember the proximity of these inlets when holding activities that may impact our natural waterways.

The pollutants that are of most concern at MU are petroleum products, hazardous materials, pesticides and fertilizer, sediment, and trash such as cans bottles and straws.

So what can you do? Instead of washing your car in a parking lot or driver way, where runoff will make its way to the stream, take your car to a local car wash where the water is collected and sent to the wastewater treatment plant. Only change your car’s oil in a safe location where runoff cannot occur and be sure to collect and dispose of used oil properly. Don’t throw cigarette butts out your car window or onto the ground. They’ll wash into the creek during the next rain. And most importantly, do not pour any materials down or throw trash into a storm sewer. With few exceptions, the only thing that should find its way into storm water drains is rainwater.

For more information on Storm Water please see the EHS webpage http://ehs.missouri.edu/env/stormwater.html