Safety Bulletin

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Environmental Health & Safety

What's Inside

Staying Afloat

According to the U. S. Coast Guard, almost 71 percent of all fatal boating accident victims in 2012 drowned, and of those, almost 85 percent were reported not to have been wearing a personal floatation device – also known as a PFD, life jacket or life vest. Ski belts are not legal life jackets.

Connecticut Life jacket and Personal Flotation Device Laws:

- There must be a wearable life jacket on board for each person aboard every vessel.
- Each life jacket must be readily accessible.
- Each life jacket must fit the intended wearer.
- If the vessel is required to have a Type IV "throwable" PFD it must be immediately available.
- Life jackets must be U.S. Coast Guard approved and have a legible label.
- Be in serviceable condition (all straps and buckles must be in good condition and able to perform their jobs; all seams and material must be intact).
- Be worn by children under 13 years old on any vessel that is underway unless the child is below deck or in an enclosed cabin.
- Be worn by anyone operating or riding on a personal watercraft (PWC).
- Be worn by anyone being pulled behind a boat (such as tubing or skiing).
- Be worn by anyone in a manually propelled vessel from October 1 through May 31 (must be Type I, II, III, V or V-hybrid).
- Inflatable life jackets may not be used by persons engaged in high-speed water sports (such as riding PWCs or water-skiing) and may not be used by persons weighing under 90 lbs. or under 16 years of age.
- All vessels 16 feet and over, except kayaks and canoes, must also carry a Type IV "throwable" device in addition to the required number of wearable life jackets.

Fitting Your Life Jacket

- Loosen all the straps, put the PFD on and zip it up.
- Start at the waist and tighten all the straps. If it has shoulder straps, tighten them last. It should feel snug but not uncomfortable.
- Next, have someone pull up on the PFD shoulders. If it moves up past your nose or head, try tightening the straps. If it still moves up, the PFD is too large.
- Check your movements to make sure it is comfortable and will not chafe you while paddling.
- If possible, test your PFD in a pool or shallow water to see how it works. It should not ride up or slip over your chin while floating.

When selecting a PFD, the proper size is important. Too small may not keep you afloat and too large may come off on impact if you are suddenly thrown into the water.

Remember: A life jacket can provide that "extra lift" to keep you afloat until help comes. For additional information on safe boating, visit Connecticut's DEEP website.

What To Wear In The Lab

Attire which is totally suitable for summer weather — shorts, sandals, mini-skirts, tank tops, etc—is not appropriate attire for the laboratory. Maximize your protection by following a few simple rules to keep yourself protected while working in a lab.

- Sandals and open-toe shoes should never be worn in a laboratory. Be sure you wear solid top shoes and that the upper portion of the shoe completely covers your foot.
- Shorts, skirts, and tank tops or cropped shirts are not appropriate attire for laboratories. Be sure that clothing worn in the laboratory covers exposed skin.

So, you can wear your sandals and shorts to work, but please change into long pants and shoes before going into the laboratory, even if you are not planning on working with hazardous materials yourself. Also remember to put on your safety glasses when in the laboratory. A spill or accident by another lab worker could cause you to inadvertently be exposed to potentially injurious hazardous materials.

Good laboratory safety begins with the appropriate attire. It is one of the best ways to prevent an exposure to hazardous materials in the laboratory.

Above Average Storm Season

Hurricane season has begun and federal forecasters expect an above average storm season. Whether living along the coast, by a river or stream, or far inland, a tropical storm or hurricane striking New England may affect you and your local area.

A major concern this year is 'storm surge'. While we're all familiar with 'storm categories' - how much wind is in the storm - most of us aren't familiar with 'storm surge'.

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm over and above the predicted astronomical tides, which can create a surge of water which could penetrate inland, up rivers, into bays and cause flooding that travels miles and miles from the shoreline.

Take three steps to be prepared: get a kit, make a plan and stay informed. Visit Yale Emergency Management for information and resources for keeping safe during severe weather.

Take The Bite Out of Summer

Are you ready to scream "COME AND GET IT" when you step outside? Thanks to an extraordinarily wet June, CT has been a perfect breeding habitat for mosquitoes and they're coming out in full force.

Eliminate potential mosquito breeding areas by removing standing water in and around your house or apartment. Be especially aware of any item outside that can serve as a water container. Water that remains stagnant for just a few days can support large populations of mosquitoes.

Keeping roof gutters clear, drilling holes in the bottom of your recycling bin, and turning over wading pools and wheelbarrows when they're not is use will help too. Aerate ornamental pools or stock with fish as well. Check all window screens to be sure they're in good repair.

If you like to be outdoors, be extra careful at dawn and dusk, the times when mosquitoes are generally most active. Dress in light colored long sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks when outdoors for long periods of time. Applying insect repellent to your clothes instead of your skin can help prevent any skin irritation. Repellent containing 30% DEET is sufficient for almost all circumstances. Be sure to follow label instructions. Don't apply insect repellent to sunburned skin. When applying both sunscreen and bug repellent, apply the sunscreen first. Wait 30 minutes before applying the bug repellent.

Don't use bug repellent on children's hands because they may rub their eyes or put their hands in their mouths.

When Lightning Strikes

Find safe shelter.

A safe shelter is a building with electricity and/or plumbing or a metal-topped vehicle with windows closed.

Picnic shelters, dugouts, small buildings without plumbing or electricity are *not* safe.

Key Indoor Safety Tips

- Stay off corded phones. You can use cellular or cordless phones.
- Don't touch electrical equipment or cords.
- Avoid plumbing. Do not wash your hands, take a shower or wash dishes.
- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.
- Do not lie on concrete floors or lean against concrete walls.

Bring in Your Pets

Dog houses are not safe shelters. Dogs that are chained to trees or on metal runners are particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes.

Protect Your Personal Property

Lightning generates electric surges that can damage electronic equipment some distance from the actual strike. Typical surge protectors will not protect equipment from a lightning strike. Do **not** unplug equipment during a thunderstorm as there is a risk you could be struck.

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EVALUATION • PREVENTION • RESPONSE
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT • TRAINING

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Rules of the ~~Road~~ Water

In 2012, 67% of boating accidents in CT that resulted in fatalities were alcohol related. 29% of boating accidents with injuries requiring medical attention beyond first aid where also attributed to alcohol.

Alcohol can impair a boater's judgment, balance, vision, reaction time, and increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effects of cold water immersion.

If a person is found to be boating under the influence (BUI), penalties in CT include fines, jail and loss of boating privileges.

Incident Report

Description: Bite from tick infected with Anaplasma phagocytophilum

A researcher working with ticks infected with anaplasma phagocytophilum sustained an exposure to a tick bite when one infected tick was found on the researcher's collar-bone partially engorged. The researcher was collecting ticks for dissection of tissues and extraction of DNA while wearing a lab coat with open sleeves along with a pair of gloves.

Resolution: EHS met with the researcher to understand the experimental procedure on how ticks are handled. Upon discussion with the scientist, EHS made several recommendations which included:

1. Wear white lab coats with cuffs, that fit tightly at the wrist, because the most likely route for the tick exposure in this incident was the opening between the sleeve of the lab coat and the gloves.
2. Limit the number of infected ticks handled in the experimental area to keep track of any escaping ticks.
3. Use of a clear white plastic tray with the edges of the tray coated with Vaseline to keep the ticks restricted within the work area. EHS also made several suggestions to euthanize the ticks within plastic tubes, since the experimental procedure was terminal.

Lessons Learned: This incident drives home the following critical lessons in laboratory safety:

1. The importance of performing a risk assessment with your supervisor and Principal Investigator to minimize the chances for exposure to biohazards and develop safe work practices to manage the risks identified.
2. The importance of wearing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) tailored to the experimental procedure. This incident also gave EHS the opportunity to develop specific training material to work safety with ticks.