

# THE SAFETY OBSERVER

A Quarterly Newsletter by the Environmental Health and Safety Office

## SUMMER NEWSLETTER

VOL 2. ISSUE 2 JUN. 08

### National Safety Month 2008



Every June the National Safety Council celebrates America's official National Safety Month by addressing four unique and common safety topics. The safety council will highlight the most significant reasons for unintentional injuries and deaths in the American workplace, on the road and in the home and community. This month, the topics are emergency prevention, distracted driving, poison prevention, and fall prevention. Usually you can see the professional safety community supporting the cause with their green ribbons pinned to their chests as a sign of solidarity for safety in the community.

As the month approaches it is important for the UIC community to take notice of these topics since a significant proportion of us are involved with these tasks. Distracted driving is responsible for nearly 80 percent of crashes. The NSC reminds drivers that their first responsibility is safe driving. Make a difference at work, at home, in your community. Another important issue involves prescription medication. Did you know that prescription drug overdoses are a leading cause of accidental death. Use caution when taking medications. Knowing your risk of unintentional overdose can save your life and those closely related to you.

A common fallacy of thinking about serious injury from falls are that they only happened to the elderly or the disable, this stereotypical thinking must be avoided since falls are more common than you think – and are a leading cause of on-the-job injuries. Keep your workplace safe. A few changes can make the difference between safety and being at-risk for falls.

So as June approaches take a closer look at the routine things you and others do. You may find yourself wondering why you take such unreasonable chances for something so simple as talking on a cell phone while driving or skipping over the directions of your medical prescriptions. You may find that life can be more rewarding if you stop, take a breath, think, and then act. For more information visit [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

### Laboratory Identification Data Card Goes Online

When fires, chemical releases, power failures, water leaks and other building emergencies occur on Campus, UIC Police, Facilities Management and the Chicago Fire Department are hesitant to enter a room for fear of what may be on the other side of the door. Being a premier research institution, we should appreciate that unfamiliar settings create anxieties, especially under emergency response events. To help mitigate the unexpected and comply with federal, state and local signage regulations, the UIC Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHSO) had instituted the Laboratory Identification Data Card (Lab ID Data Card) system.

The 4" X 6" Lab ID Data Cards are posted in acrylic holders adjacent to rooms containing chemical, biological, electrical, ionizing and non-ionizing radiation or other potential hazards. They identify the hazards and lab contacts who can provide information regarding the status of the room. Unfortunately, it has not always been easy to update this information as frequently as space use or personnel have changed. In some instances, the cards have disappeared, been damaged during flooding or destroyed in a fire.

Through the combined effort of Facilities Information Management (FIM) and EHSO, a more efficient system has been created to electronically update Lab ID Data cards. It will generate a database that can be accessed from several locations. The cards can be easily updated and printed.

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#### NEWSLETTER SPOTLIGHT

- **National Safety Month**
- **UIC Laboratory Cards**
- **Directors Corner**
- **UIC Chemical Waste Removal**
- **Tornados in Chicago**
- **Emergency Planning**

## DIRECTOR'S

**C** While every effort is made to prevent incidents and eliminate hazards, emergencies and disasters will always occur. We cannot ignore the possibility of a natural disaster such as a tornado, a technological emergency such as a major power failure, or violent events such as an active shooter. **O** Therefore it is vital that each of us evaluate our preparedness for such events, examining both our workplace and our home environments. **R** **N** **E** **R**

The College of Pharmacy fire and subsequent flooding offers valuable insights into measures which were either taken prior to the event or should be taken to prepare for emergencies. Some of the lessons we have learned are:

- How important it is to back-up your data from your computer hard drive, in the event you lose your computer.
- Keep critical documents in fireproof/waterproof containers or upper file cabinet drawers away from the floor.
- Identify an alternative site for temporary housing or work, in the event your primary site or home is compromised.
- Have a plan for obtaining emergency supplies and services, such as equipment rental.
- Keep contact names and phone numbers up to date.
- Identify a gathering area where family members can meet in the event of separation; know where the designated gathering area is for your workplace.
- Get rid of junk, old paper, outdated chemicals and other materials that add hazards to a disaster scene and hamper return to operations.
- Know the evacuation routes from your location and practice them regularly.

Even though all of us try to prevent potential emergencies and mitigate their impact, we need to anticipate them and plan ahead. For further information, include planning guidelines, emergency supply lists, and business recovery information, an excellent starting point is <http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/discussion/planrespond/preparedness/index.html>.

In the Past few weeks, emails were sent asking the Department Gatekeepers to associate Principal Investigators (PIs) and Lab Directors to the listed rooms. The Gatekeepers' responses will generate emails to the PIs and Lab Directors with a link to electronic forms to be completed for their hazardous use space(s). The PIs and Lab Directors will be able to forward the email with the link to the forms to the Chemical Hygiene Officer (CHO) or other knowledgeable lab personnel to complete. The information will be maintained on a secure server for easy updating and local printing. In the future, this service will be expanded to Facilities and other non-lab hazardous use areas.

Concerns may be answered through [health-safety@uic.edu](mailto:health-safety@uic.edu).

The section for Unattended Operations on the back of the card is for those occasions when a researcher must leave the lab while experiments are running, whether to go to lunch, class or leaving campus. Contact information will have to be written in and available in case of a mishap.

When you receive the email, generate new cards and keep them current.

If you have questions or technical difficulties, contact EHSO at [health-safety@uic.edu](mailto:health-safety@uic.edu) or 6-7411

## Removing Chemical Waste at UIC

Chemical waste is generated from many areas on campus, but mostly from research laboratories. The Environmental Health and Safety Office will collect and remove this chemical waste upon request. In the past, most requests have come to us via fax. However, we now prefer that chemical waste removal requests be sent via email at our list serve, which is [chemwaste@uic.edu](mailto:chemwaste@uic.edu). We will still accept requests submitted via fax (to 3-3703) or interoffice mail (MC 645). The use of [chemwaste@uic.edu](mailto:chemwaste@uic.edu) will help to eliminate unreadable or undelivered faxes or interoffice mail. The forms for chemical waste pickups are available at <http://www.uic.edu/depts/envh/HSS/ChemWaste.html>. You may also direct any questions to [chemwaste@uic.edu](mailto:chemwaste@uic.edu).

## Tornados in Chicago

According to the Illinois State Climatologist Office, tornadoes are tracked through Illinois at a rate of just over 29 per year. Illinois is in the heart of "Tornado Alley," an area of the U.S. known for its violent outbreaks of severe storms. All areas of the state are at the risk of encountering a tornado. Tornadoes are one of nature's most destructive phenomenon. Scientists define tornadoes as violently rotating columns of air. Tornadoes form in severe weather, from large anvil-shaped clouds called cumulonimbus clouds. Tornadoes come in different shapes and sizes and can reach up to speeds of over 200 miles per hour.

### What to Do During a Tornado

If you are under a tornado **WARNING**, seek shelter **immediately**

- **A structure** (e.g. residence, small building, school, nursing home, hospital, factory, shopping center, high-rise building)

Go to a pre-designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck. Do not open windows.

- **A vehicle, trailer, or mobile home**

Get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or a storm shelter.

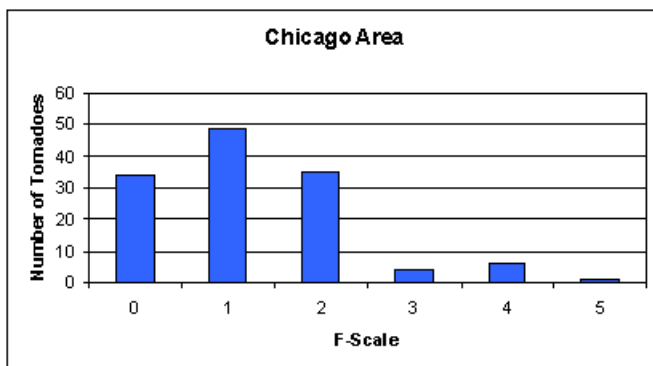
- **The outside with no shelter**

Lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential for flooding. Do not get under an over-pass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.

Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter. Watch out for flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries!

### CHICAGO-AREA TORNADO GRAPHS

Figures compiled by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.  
TORNADOES BY F-SCALE



### Safety Cartoon

"What the heck is THAT??"

Almeida Cartoons:  
[www.almeidacartoons.com/  
Safe\\_toons1.html](http://www.almeidacartoons.com/Safe_toons1.html)

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## In Case of Emergency

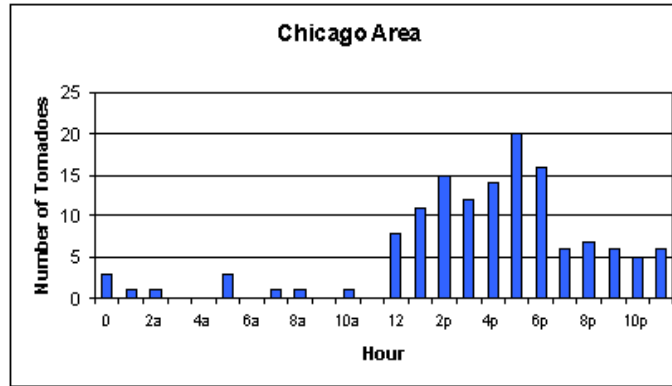
### Emergency Building Evacuations

In preparation for any event that may require you to evacuate a building, it's important to know what you should do beforehand so that you're better prepared to evacuate the building safely and efficiently should the need arise.

1. Identify the two nearest exits for your area. It's important to know two exit paths should you find one blocked by smoke, fire or other hazards.
2. Identify the location of the nearest fire alarm pull station if they exist in your building. This is the best way to alert others about a fire.
3. Follow the instructions of emergency services personnel. These people will include the UIC Police Department, the Chicago Fire Department, the UIC Environmental Health and Safety office and other emergency services personnel.
4. Once the fire alarm is activated you should leave immediately through the nearest and safest exit. Do not attempt to use the elevators as a means of exit.
5. If you're not able to evacuate the building without assistance you may go into any room that has a door that can be shut and a phone that can be used to call the UIC Police. Their emergency phone number is 5-5555. Be prepared to tell them your location so that they know where to find you. If there's visible smoke or fire in your immediate area, you should proceed to the nearest stairwell landing and wait for evacuation assistance.
6. Close, but do not lock, all doors to help slow the spread of fire and smoke. Once you're outside, proceed to move away from the building so that you're far enough away from any danger that may exist such as shattering glass. This also gives emergency services personnel enough room to do their job.

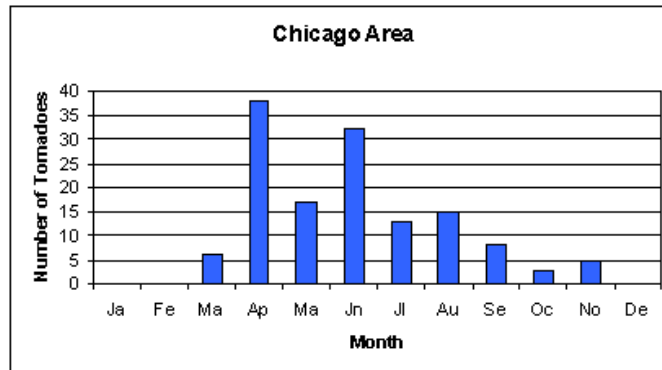
If you have further questions regarding evacuation safety, please contact the Environmental Health and Safety Office for assistance at 6-7411.

### TORNADOES BY HOUR



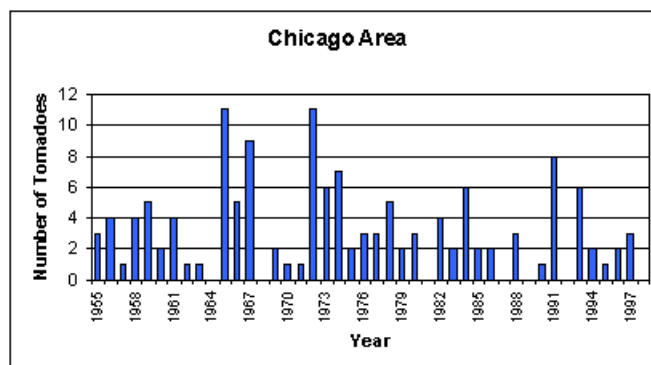
Tornadoes peak in the afternoon, when convectional heating is at a maximum. The amount of tornadoes at any other time is fairly low, when it is compared to the afternoon hours (1-6). The peak hour of tornadoes is at 5 p.m.

### TORNADOES BY MONTH



Late spring-early summer, when cold air masses and warm air masses are in constant interaction in the Midwest, is the peak of tornado activity in the year. April, May, and June have the most frequent occurrences of tornadoes. The month with the most frequent occurrences is April.

### TORNADOES BY YEAR



The amount of tornadoes per year is very erratic. The years that have maximums in tornado occurrences are 1965, 1972, and 1991.

References:

<http://www.fema.gov/hazard/tornado>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes>