



# The Safety Net

Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University Environmental Health & Safety Newsletter

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## Special Interest Articles:

- Charge into Fire Safety
- Stay Aware, Stay Safe
- SciShield & SciSure updates
- EHS Training

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## October is ABSA National Biosafety Month

ABSA International is proud to announce the 12th Anniversary of Biosafety and Biosecurity Month in October 2025. For October 2025 Biosafety and Biosecurity Month, we encourage our members to use this opportunity to spotlight training ideas, stewardship, and engagement, how to foster positive relationships within the research community, and how to support responsible and ethical research through our profession.

In September, the National Institutes of Health announced a [new initiative](#) to modernize and strengthen biosafety policies, practices, and oversight. This effort aims to ensure that NIH's biosafety framework keeps pace with evolving risks posed by rapid advances in science and technology. From Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, NIH Director:

*In the coming months, NIH will work closely with the research community and stakeholders to create the biosafety framework of the 21st century. First, NIH will revamp biosafety oversight to address potential risks beyond recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid technologies. At the same time, the widespread use of certain low-risk recombinant technologies may no longer warrant the oversight once deemed necessary, allowing us to reduce red tape for some research.*

*Second, NIH will strengthen our partnerships with institutional oversight bodies to empower Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBC), reinforcing their position as the front lines of biosafety oversight. This will also provide an opportunity for institutional leadership to reassess whether their IBCs are receiving support and resources equal to other institutional committees, such as those who review human subjects research and the care and use of animals.<sup>1</sup>*

Further information can also be found on the NIH OSP website at <https://osp.od.nih.gov/policies/biosafety-and-biosecurity-policy#tab2/>

<sup>1</sup> NIH launches initiative to modernize and strengthen biosafety oversight (2025) National Institutes of Health. Available at: <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/nih-director/statements/nih-launches-initiative-modernize-strengthen-biosafety-oversight> (Accessed: 24 September 2025).



## Charge into Fire Safety

This year's National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) [Fire Prevention Week™ campaign](#), October 5-11, "**Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home**," works to educate everyone about using these batteries safely. The campaign stresses how important it is to BUY, CHARGE, and RECYCLE lithium-ion batteries safely.

3 Steps to Charge into Fire Safety:.

- **Buy only listed products.** When buying a lithium-ion battery product, look for a safety certification mark such as UL, ETL, or CSA.
- **Charge devices safely.** Always use the cords that came with the product to charge. Follow the instructions from the manufacturer. Buy new chargers from the manufacturer or one that the manufacturer has approved. Charge your device on a hard surface. Don't overcharge your device. Unplug it or remove the battery when it's fully charged.
- **Recycle batteries responsibly.** Don't throw lithium-ion batteries in the trash or regular recycling bins because they could start a fire. Recycle your device or battery at a safe battery recycling location. Look for EH&S's yellow bins on the Medical Campus to recycle your batteries.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> CELEBRATE NFPA fire prevention week (FPW), October 5-11 (no date) [nfpa.org](https://www.nfpa.org/events/fire-prevention-week#campaign-safety-messages). Available at: <https://www.nfpa.org/events/fire-prevention-week#campaign-safety-messages> (Accessed: 24 September 2025).

## Fit Test Fee Changes

EH&S is not funded for the supplies or equipment associated with performing this service; thus, cost recovery is necessary. Beginning **July 01, 2026**, the respirator fit testing cost increased to **\$12.00** per person. This reflects the rising costs of materials, supplies, and equipment maintenance that are used for this service.

Fit test prerequisites:

- 1) [Respiratory protection training](#) must be successfully completed.
- 2) [Medical Questionnaire](#) must be submitted and approved.

EH&S will charge departments for "no-show" appointments and "turn-away" tests. Therefore, you will be turned away when arriving for your fit test appointment if (1) you arrive with facial hair and/or (2) your prerequisites are not complete.

You are encouraged to plan for this increase in the upcoming budget cycle. If you have any questions about the Respiratory Protection Program, please contact Kristi Olivar at 446-5798.



## Stay Aware, Stay Safe

Join us this for the Fall Special Emphasis Series as we focus on being situationally aware at work. Through awareness, education, and proactive safety strategies, we aim to create a safer environment for all.

Let's work together to reduce risks and keep every step secure.

Stay alert. Stay prepared. Stay safe.

**Situational Awareness: Preventing Slips and Falls on Slippery Surfaces.**

Slips, trips, and falls can happen in an instant—but they are often preventable. Here are a few things to remember when faced with a potentially slippery floor:

- **Identifying Hazardous Areas:** Slippery surfaces can occur due to weather conditions, spills, or wet floors in high-traffic areas. Identifying potential hazards early, such as icy walkways, wet floors, or freshly mopped areas, is essential to preventing slips and fall.

- **Proper Footwear:** Wearing appropriate footwear with non-slip soles can help reduce the risk of slipping. Employees should be aware of weather forecasts and adjust their footwear accordingly (e.g., wearing boots with traction in winter conditions).
- **Maintain a Clear Path:** Ensure that walkways are free of obstructions and that areas prone to wetness are clearly marked with signs. Employees should remain vigilant and pay attention to changes in surface conditions, such as wet or icy patches.
- **Quick Response to Spills:** If a spill occurs, respond immediately by cleaning it up or marking the area with a caution sign. Employees should report any unaddressed wet or slippery areas to management or facilities.

**Always walk with caution in areas where spills or slippery conditions are likely. Take small steps, and if you need to hurry, look for safe alternate routes.**

### Risk Management Team

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## Ask the S.O.B.

**Q:** Dear S.O.B.,

I work with patients and have been told to get a respirator fit test. How do I schedule a fit test?

- Rez Preaux

**A:** Dear Rez,

We use OnceHub to schedule our fit tests. To make an appointment, visit <https://go.oncehub.com/VHSRespiratorFitTesting> and select your preferred date and time.

Email and text confirmation notifications will be sent to you after the appointment is made. Reminders will be sent out 24 hours and 1 hour before your scheduled appointment. If you cancel or reschedule your appointment, you will get email notifications for that too!

If you have a question for the S.O.B., email [ehs@odu.edu](mailto:ehs@odu.edu).



*Safety Office Boy to the rescue!*

## Notes from the Office

### ***EH&S Training Courses.***

Course	Date/Time	Location
Chemical Hygiene Plan	October 16, 2025 9:30 AM -12:30 PM November 20, 2025 9:30 AM -12:30 PM	Lewis Hall 2162 Lewis Hall 2162
Radiation Safety in the Laboratory	Contact EH&S	
Biosafety in the Laboratory Biological Materials Shipping Autoclave Safety Training OHSP Training Respiratory Protection	Available on SciShield!	<a href="https://evms.scishield.com/">https://evms.scishield.com/</a>
HAZCOM Bloodborne Pathogens Laboratory Safety for Temporary Personnel	Available on Blackboard!	<a href="https://evms.blackboard.com/">https://evms.blackboard.com/</a>