



Weill Cornell Medical College

# EHS News

## WCMC's Strategic Approach to Emergency Planning

While we can't predict when an emergency may happen or what form it may take, WCMC is working proactively to plan for emergencies that may affect the College. WCMC formed an Emergency Management Committee which meets on a regular basis to identify emergency planning priorities, develop Department / Division Emergency Plans, and test our current emergency response capabilities. The Emergency Management Committee established WCMC's approach to emergency planning which focuses on: Prevention, Planning, Communication, and Drilling. More information is available at: <http://www.cornellemergency.org/planning>.

PREVENTION	PLANNING	COMMUNICATION	DRILLING
<p>Prevention focuses on <b>long-term modifications to keep hazards from developing into emergencies</b> or reduce their effects when emergencies occur. This is accomplished by hardening of infrastructure and systems. These modifications may be either structural or non-structural.</p> <p>Prevention strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perimeter building security (guards, cameras)</li> <li>• Room access controls (proximity sensor)</li> <li>• Emergency Power</li> <li>• Computer protection, backup, and redundancy (ITS server backups, Antivirus software)</li> </ul>	<p>Planning includes the <b>development of inventories, procedures, and plans to ensure that emergencies will be responded to effectively</b>. Planning minimizes harm to human health and damage to property.</p> <p>Planning measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Assessments</li> <li>• Gap Analyses</li> <li>• Emergency Management Committee</li> <li>• Emergency Operations Team</li> <li>• Departmental and Campus-wide Emergency Plans</li> <li>• Hazardous Material Inventories</li> <li>• Emergency Operations Centers</li> </ul>	<p>Communication consists of the <b>steps taken to inform people about emergency situations and responses during an emergency</b>. Multiple and redundant systems are used to ensure those affected have emergency and recovery information.</p> <p>Communication strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus-wide Emergency Notification System</li> <li>• Combined College/Hospital Emergency Website</li> <li>• Emergency Information Hotline</li> <li>• Emergency Radios</li> <li>• New Employee/Student Emergency Procedures training</li> <li>• Emergency Team training</li> <li>• Emergency Notification to Relevant Government Agencies</li> <li>• Notification of General Public via Local Media</li> </ul>	<p>Drilling and testing is the <b>regular practice of emergency response situations and inspection of equipment, plans and procedures</b> to ensure the staffing and resources needed to respond to and recover from an actual emergency will be available.</p> <p>Drilling and testing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desktop drills</li> <li>• Departmental drills</li> <li>• Emergency Generator tests</li> <li>• Campus-wide Emergency Notification System tests</li> </ul>

### Did you know . . .

You can access Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) on the EHS website?

<http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/msds.htm>

Through Cornell University's subscription service, you can access electronic copies of MSDS's for thousands of chemicals and biological materials. EHS also provides chemical supplier information and links to other chemical safety information sites.

### EHS Has Moved

Here is our new contact information.

Environmental Health and Safety  
 Laurel Building – 402 East 67<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Concourse 2 Level, Room LA-0020  
 Phone: 646-962-7233 (1-7233)  
 Fax: 646-962-0288  
 Email: [ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu)



*Need new EHS Magnets? Contact EHS.*

Current newsletter available electronically at:  
<http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/news>

**646-962-7233 (1-7233)**  
**ehs@med.cornell.edu**

## Be Safe, Save Money and Protect the Environment?

### Sharps Disposal at WCMC



The primary reason we use sharps containers (closeable, puncture resistant, leak-proof containers) is to protect against needle stick / sharps injuries. Sharps are defined as any glass, metal, or plastic instrument or item that can cut or has the potential to cut, puncture, scratch, or abrade skin. This includes but is not limited to hypodermic needles, syringes, Pasteur pipettes, pipette tips, scalpel blades, blood vials, needles with attached tubing, and culture dishes.

At WCMC, we utilize re-useable sharps containers, rather than disposable sharps containers. Through this process, Departments and WCMC save money every time a sharps container is collected because they don't have to keep purchasing new containers. Re-using containers is also more environmentally sustainable.

**How does it work?** Sharps are placed into sharps containers for disposal and collected on a routine basis by Stericycle-Biosystems contracted staff. Once sharps containers are collected from clinical areas and laboratories by WCMC's sharps disposal vendor, they are sent to an automated treatment facility where the sharps containers are mechanically opened and emptied. The sharps are decontaminated by autoclave, shredded until unrecognizable and then disposed in an approved landfill. The sharps containers are disinfected, inspected and returned to service at WCMC. It is important to understand that no chemical treatment or destruction is performed when sharps are disposed. If hazardous chemicals or drugs are placed into the sharps containers they are not treated and could contaminate the environment. Additional information for disposing sharps contaminated with chemicals or other hazardous agents is available in the EHS Updates on *Clinical Chemical Waste* and *Clinical Chemotherapeutic Waste* at: <http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/manuals.htm>.



In 2008 **10,000 sharps containers (or 62 tons)** were collected at WCMC. By **reusing** non-disposable sharps containers, WCMC **saved over \$300,000** and prevented over **30,000 pounds of plastic** from going into landfills.

## Safety Training . . . Out of the classroom and into the workplace.

To better meet your needs, EHS is offering more hands-on safety training which takes place in the workplace setting, rather than in a classroom. This hands-on approach allows us to tailor trainings to the specific hazards in each workplace, rather than focus on broad safety topics.

Some of the hands-on safety trainings we've offered (with links to supplementary information) include:

- **Building Specific Fire Safety and Evacuation Training** (building-specific procedures available in the *Fire Safety Manual*: <http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/manuals.htm>)
- **Fire Safety in the Laboratory** (handouts from the training available: <http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/guides/LabFireSafety.pdf>)
- **Chemical Hood Safety** (review the *Chemical Hood Update*: <http://weill.cornell.edu/ehs/updates.htm>)
- **Chemical Waste Disposal** (more information available in the *Waste Disposal Procedures Manual*: <http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/manuals.htm>)
- **On-site Laboratory Safety** (check out the *Laboratory Chemical Hygiene Plan*: <http://www.med.cornell.edu/ehs/manuals.htm>)



### Spotlight: Fire Safety in the Laboratory

In the last EHS Newsletter, we reviewed the Top 10 most common violations the FDNY finds when visiting laboratories during their annual permitting inspection. To help WCMC laboratories prevent violations, EHS visited all labs and reviewed the Top 10 list in the laboratory setting. During this hands-on training, EHS helped identify any areas of concern specific to that laboratory and assisted lab staff in making changes if necessary.