Safety Awareness for Employees — March 2025; Issue 106

# S.A.F.E. Newsletter

# Watch Your Step

With spring on the horizon and longer, warmer days ahead, many of us are beginning to make plans for outdoor projects and spring cleaning. As your spring "to do" list starts to take shape, don't forget to make safety part of the plan.

Ladders are a common household tool, used in all seasons for everything from spring cleaning to holiday decorating. While ladders are safe when used properly, thousands of injuries still occur each year. This is why the American Ladder Institute (ALI) created National Ladder Safety Month, which is held each March and is dedicated to promoting ladder safety at home and work. By following the basic rules of ladder safety and having a fall prevention plan in place, serious accidents can be eliminated or substantially reduced.

**1.Use the right ladder for the job.**

It is important to choose a ladder that has the proper load capacity for the job. Consider your own weight as well as the weight of your equipment, tools and materials. The ladder must be long enough to work from without using the top 3 feet.

**2. Inspect the ladder before and after use.**

Before using a ladder, always perform a thorough inspection to check for any signs of damage, wear, or loose components, including the rungs, side rails, feet, locking mechanisms, and any visible cracks or dents; ensure the ladder is clean and free of grease or dirt that could cause slipping, and if any damage is found, do not use the ladder and have it repaired or replaced.

**3. Set the ladder up correctly.**

Ladder placement is important. When using a portable ladder, make sure it is placed on a level surface and that it has non-slip base pads. Protect the base of ladder with a barricade in high traffic areas. Be sure to lock or block any nearby doors that open toward you. If you're using a stepladder, ensure that it is fully open before use.

**4. Climb and descend the ladder with caution.**

Stay near the middle and face the ladder while holding onto the side rails with at least one hand when climbing or descending. Carry your tools on a belt or hoist and always keep at least three points of contact with the ladder. Look for overhead power lines before handling or climbing a ladder.

**5. Be safe and use common sense when using a ladder.**

Do not lean outside the ladder rails. Keep the ladder and the surrounding area free of clutter and never use a ladder for something other than its intended purpose. Do not stand on the top step or the top cap of the ladder and never use a ladder horizontally like a platform. Avoid placing a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases and never move or shift a ladder while in use.

If it looks risky, it probably is. Spending your weekend in the hospital won't get the chores done at home. Don't take risks. Ask for help or rework your plan. Proper ladder use allows you to complete tasks more efficiently and safely.

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# Let Them Eat...

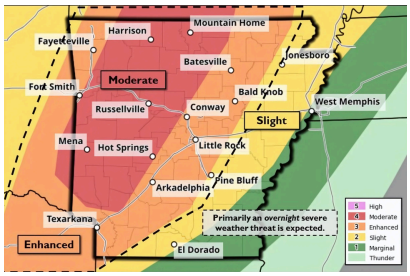
We've all probably been there: You pull out your milk from the fridge only to realize it's two days past the expiration date. Upon further inspection, it looks and smells just fine, but instinct tells you it's best to toss rather than risk getting sick. While expiration dates help us stay safe, it's hard to not wonder if one or even three days past truly makes a difference - especially now, with food costs on the rise.

The truth is that expiration dates largely depend on the type of food and its chemical composition, according to food scientists. In fact, some foods may start to spoil but are not necessarily unsafe to eat. Deciphering what every type of label or date really means can be confusing, especially if you make it a priority to cut down on food waste and don't want to toss something unless you truly have to. Let's take a look at some common terms...

An **expiration date** can be somewhat of a nebulous term and is often confused with a best-by date. In general, an expiration date is when a food is considered no longer safe to consume to avoid potential illness; the **best-by date** label applies to how something tastes and its quality, rather than food safety. A best-by date is the date the manufacturer recommends you consume the product by for the best flavor and texture. The **sell-by date** is the last day that it is ok for a grocery store to keep the item on shelves, as determined by the food manufacturer. Finally, the most straightforward of all the labels, the **freeze-by date** is the date by which you should freeze a food item to avoid it deteriorating rapidly.

Many people throw away food that is still safe to eat because they misunderstand the labels. Understanding these dates can help reduce food waste which is a great way to save money, help the environment, and make the most of the food you buy. Every small effort helps.

# Severe Weather Aware




Each March the National Weather Service focuses on Severe Weather Awareness across the US. This annual event aims to increase awareness of severe weather dangers and encourage individuals to take steps to protect themselves and their property.

Severe weather can happen anytime, in any part of the country. Locally, severe weather can include hazardous conditions produced by thunderstorms, including damaging winds, tornadoes, large hail, and at flooding. In Arkansas, the height of severe weather season usually happens during springtime with another bump in activity happening in late fall. In order to stay safe during severe weather, make sure you understand the risks, safety measures and how to be prepared.

Especially for Arkansans, understanding the difference between a Tornado Watch and a Tornado Warning is critical. A watch means conditions are favorable for a tornado, while a warning indicates that a tornado has been sighted or detected by radar. If a tornado threatens your area directly, seek shelter immediately.

It is also recommended that everyone has at least two ways to receive emergency weather notifications and have an emergency kit with essentials like water, non-perishable food, a flashlight, batteries, a first-aid kit and any necessary medications. Keep this kit in an easily accessible location or, better yet, take it with you when you take shelter.

By staying informed and taking proactive measures, we can ensure the safety and well-being of everyone on campus and at home.

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# Keeping it Clean

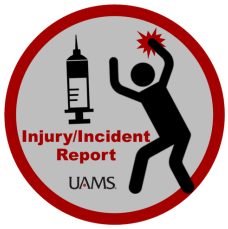
A clean laboratory is crucial for ensuring accurate experimental results, maintaining safety, preventing contamination, and promoting efficient workflow by minimizing the risk of accidents from spills, exposures, and cross-contamination. All of which are essential elements of reliable scientific research and compliance with industry standards; essentially, a clean lab environment is the foundation for safe and accurate scientific work.

Laboratory housekeeping is the practice of keeping a lab clean, organized, and safe. Housekeeping should be a daily task that includes cleaning up spills, storing chemicals properly, and ensuring that emergency equipment is readily accessible. To ensure lab cleanliness, consider a preventative approach and clean as you go; to tidy up and clean small messes immediately as you work, rather than letting them accumulate and creating a larger cleaning task later on.


Proper waste segregation and disposal is also a critical part of maintaining lab cleanliness. Separating different types of laboratory waste into distinct containers based on their hazard level. Treatment and/or disposal methods vary with waste type. Not all lab waste can be tossed into one container with you crossing your fingers that nothing bad happens.

To clean floors in a research lab, typically you would sweep or vacuum to remove loose debris, then mop with a disinfectant solution specifically designed for lab use, ensuring to follow proper safety protocols and choose a cleaner appropriate for the type of flooring; always consult your lab's safety guidelines and cleaning procedures before starting any cleaning process. Additional cleaning services can be coordinated with campus environmental services. If you have questions or concerns please reach out to UAMS Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S).

# Incident Reporting




At UAMS, incident and injury reporting is used to document and formally communicate details about any workplace accidents, near misses, or injuries that occur. Reporting incidents and injuries at work is crucial to ensure timely medical treatment, access to workers' compensation benefits, and to help identify safety issues, implement preventive measures, and maintain compliance with regulatory standards.

Should you experience an injury or incident in the course of your work, reporting can be completed from any UAMS computer by clicking on the Injury and Incident Report icon. Depending on the type of injury, next steps are outlined on the reporting site. In cases where medical attention is needed, the Company Nurse should be contacted as soon as it is safe to do so. The company nurse will triage the incident/injury and provide direction as to where to seek any medical attention. Generally, if medical treatment is needed, go to SEHS during business hours or the Emergency Department after hours.

## St. Patrick's Day March 17