



TECH TO TECH

Newsletter

of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/CUNY

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No. 6

THE FUTURE IS NOW

From the Chair

The future of the CLT chapter, your chapter of the PSC, is in your hands.

While this is always generally applicable, it has never been more acutely consequential than NOW.

This is because chapter elections are due in April, 2005 and replacements for retiring officers are needed NOW. Take a look at the list of officers and campus representatives on page 4 to see the retirees. Their terms and hence their participation end after the election.

A number of us on the CLT executive committee have been at it for a long time. There may be other CLTs on that list who are thinking of retiring or not running again for office.

I, myself, have started my 31st year as a CLT. If that's hard for you to imagine, multiply that by 10 to the 10 to get how challenging it is for me! Well, I'm not ready for white shoes and plaid pants yet, but there should be a light turning on somewhere in your head alerting you to the fact that it's time for some younger techs to come out of hiding and start learning the ropes.

I'm particularly addressing those of you who have been CLTs for 8 or 10 years or more. You are tenured and have obviously chosen to make this your career. You know the good and bad of CUNY by now. You have a vested interest in CLT matters. The question is: will you commit to the chapter, your future, and fill a vacancy?

The idea is to move those who are part of the Expanded Executive Committee and have had some experience in union activities into vacancies near the top of the slate and fill their positions with new

THIS JUST IN: DON'T BREATHE AT WORK!

The American Heart Association (AHA) has recently issued a warning that air pollution probably has a negative effect on heart health. Among the dangers are 1) industrial pollution, bus exhaust and garbage disposal from without the building and 2) chemical, bacterial, viral and mold contamination from within.

Since "outdoor" and "indoor" air are both circulated through the building, all the above dangers will reach your breathing zone. The outdoor factors can be compared to second hand smoke. The indoor dangers may cause infection.

It is thought that the body reacts similarly to all the above risk factors—it produces inflammation in response to injury. When present in the lining of the arteries, inflammation contributes to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries.)

Ezra Seltzer

[For more information, see *HVAC Maintenance* on p. 3—Ed.]

individuals with fresh ideas for future slates. We need to do this NOW.

You needn't worry that you will be thrown into deep water and told "sink or swim." Start off by becoming a campus representative, or as an alternate to the Delegate Assembly. That way you will see how things go and learn about the issues and obstacles. Prepare for the future of the chapter NOW.

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Keep Good Records

If you read *New York State United Teachers*, you would have seen two articles (March and June 2004 issues.) I was quoted in the June issue about an NYU Technician who worked in the Hunter College cadaver lab at the Brookdale campus. Due to her exposure to formaldehyde fumes, both at NYU and Hunter, she developed a disability and is unable to continue working. NYU, her employer, did not provide her with a respirator. The Hunter College lab did not provide proper ventilation. Her union is now pursuing compensation for her.

Please note: Indoor air quality guidelines for a private employer, in this case, NYU, follow OSHA guidelines, while those for a public employer, CUNY, follow PESH guidelines. Union contracts vary. So protection and the ability to have a successful grievance or suit may be different.

Be Knowledgeable and Take Proper Precautions

From this case, you should be aware of the following:

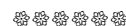
1. If you work with hazardous chemicals, make sure that you are fitted with a respirator. The Environmental Health and Safety Officer on your campus should arrange for it.
2. The fume hoods in your lab should be tested periodically to comply with proper exhaust regulations. If they have not been tested recently, request it.
3. If there is inadequate ventilation in your lab, use the procedure in your department and school to place work orders for repair. Keep abreast of proper ventilation, in a timely fashion, and if repairs are not made, notify your supervisor and/or Dean. Follow appropriate channels of communication on your campus.
4. Be knowledgeable and take proper precautions when using or disposing of hazardous materials. Ask questions about the chemicals

and reagents you work with. Remember, you have a "Right to Know."

5. If you become ill from improper ventilation or chemical exposure, seek medical attention and testing.
6. Keep detailed records of the above, as you will need documentation should you develop any disability from what may be years of exposure.
7. Notify us at the PSC if health and safety issues cannot be resolved on your campus. According to article 19 of the PSC-CUNY contract, you should be provided with "a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious harm..."
8. The Americans for Disabilities Act also affords workplace protection should your disability become documented.
9. Keep both your campus and PSC health and safety officers apprised of the health and safety issues. You must be willing to follow through with complaints.
10. On the PSC web site under health and safety, you will find a form to use. When issues occur, fill it out with details of the problems and return it to the PSC.

Have a healthy year.

Ellen P. Steinberg
Vice Chair, CLT Chapter



From The Chair

Continued from p.1

Maybe you're a bit of a lawyer and you enjoy debating the finer points and researching precedence to apply to your argument. How about some grievance education? Again, take things in small bits. Build slowly and perhaps become a grievance counselor when needed.

So, who will step up and forge the future of the CLT chapter? If it is you, call me or any CLT officer or your campus rep. All of our phone numbers are listed on page 4.

Do it NOW, because it's your future. How will you shape it?

Shelly Mendlinger

To Your Health

HVAC Maintenance—A Must

The proper maintenance of campus heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can go a long way toward averting deleterious effects of a growing world crisis caused by antibiotic-resistant microbes. An epidemic of microbial resistance coupled with a paucity of research into drug resistance (except for the work on AIDS) may portend difficult times ahead.

One of the prime methods of fighting microbial genetic change and resistance is to use sound sanitary practices. This prevents spread of the pathogens and decreases contact between different species. Contact allows for interchange of genetic materials including genes which influence antibiotic resistance.

It is evident that cleaning and disinfecting ventilation systems is of cardinal importance—more than ever before—because the danger to human health from bioaerosols has increased by several orders of magnitude.

In buildings in which windows are not or cannot be opened, proper ventilation is obtained through an HVAC system. Air is taken in from outside and circulated and recirculated through ductwork into the various units of the building. Each unit should be connected to an exhaust system through which air is removed to continue its flow.

The ventilation system must be maintained on a regular basis. This could be very costly. Many labor hours must be expended. Replacement parts are often very expensive.

Monitoring must be done to insure that a sufficient percentage of circulating air is being taken in from the outside. The connecting ducts are to be decontaminated and cleaned on a regular basis. Appropriate filters must be

changed periodically. Air intake and exhaust in populated areas must be tested.

Air contains water vapor which may condense inside the ductwork and on other HVAC surfaces. Various fungi and other hardy microorganisms begin to grow here.

Microbes are transported along the ventilation system. In this state they are called bioaerosols and are distributed to the breathing zones of people, sometimes causing infection or allergic reaction. Several years ago, tests at one of our colleges revealed the presence of extremely high concentrations of pathogenic microorganisms. Among the most dangerous of these are: *Aeromonas hydrophilia*, several

Cleaning and Disinfecting Ventilation Systems is of Cardinal Importance

species of *Aspergillus*, *Pseudomonas cepacia*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Xylophilus* and *haemolyticus* and *Vibrio vulnificus*.

PSC chapter chairpersons and their campus safety liaisons should become familiar with the college's HVAC maintenance system.

Individuals should try to learn more about indoor air quality and the HVAC system that keeps it at an acceptable level so that malfunctions may be reported and corrected.

**Ezra Seltzer
Randy Smith**

Lab Safety- Don't Touch That Hotplate!

Emergency Wash Stations

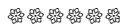
Emergency showers and eye wash stations are there to minimize damage to your skin and eyes if you are exposed to a corrosive or hazardous chemical. Make sure you know the location of these devices. You should have an emergency eyewash and/or shower within 10 seconds walking distance of the location where you are working with corrosive chemicals. In the event of a splash accident, eyes should be rinsed at the scene of the accident for at least 15 minutes.

Please do not block these safety devices with any materials. You must have unrestricted access to safety apparatus.

From *Environmental Health and Safety*, August, 2004, Indiana University—Purdue.

Ezra Seltzer

Minimize Damage To Your Skin And Eyes



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