

BEAR *in* MIND



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

JULY 2023 VOLUME 25, ISSUE 3

Safety/Fire Focus

Increase in Lithium Battery Fires Prompts new Personal Electronic Device Safety Procedure on Campus

The use of lithium batteries to power common consumer devices like smartphones, laptops, tools, e-scooters, e-bikes and more is on the rise; and according to the [Fire Safety Research Institute](#), so are lithium-ion battery fires.

So far this year, the Greeley Fire Department has reported a minimum of a dozen lithium battery fires in the local area, most from small tools and personal devices. In a December 2022 press release, the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) (CPSC) reported that between Jan. 1, 2021, through Nov. 28, 2022, they received at least 208 reports of micromobility fires or overheating incidents from 39 states, resulting in at least 19 fatalities, including five associated with e-scooters, 11 with hoverboards and three with e-bikes.



The increase in fires demonstrates a clear need for increased education about fire safety issues and the implementation of effective procedures on campus to reduce the risk of fires and explosions from lithium batteries. UNC's new [Personal Electric Device \(PED\) and Lithium Battery Safety Procedure](#) explains the general procedures for the operational use of PEDs on campus and guidelines for charging, storing, using and disposing of lithium batteries.

The document also stipulates that lithium batteries and devices that contain lithium batteries shall not be operated, charged and/or stored anywhere on UNC's campus unless the battery bears the seal of an independent testing laboratory accredited by the CPSC. (Example: UL Listed, TÜV SÜD certification mark) Such certification, logo, or name of an accredited laboratory shall be displayed directly on the PED and/or the battery for the device.



Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to read the new procedure and ensure their electronic devices that are powered by lithium batteries meet the CPSC standards. Questions can be directed to the [Environmental Health and Safety Department](#).

Inside this Issue

NEW Lithium Battery Safety Procedure	1
Plastic Free July	2
Stormwater	2
Health & Safety Festival	3
Heat Stress & Strain	3
UV Safety Month	4

Dates to Remember

- July 4 - Independence Day
- August 16 - Residence Halls Open
- August 21 - Fall Semester Classes begin
- September 4 - Labor Day (University Closed)
- September 13 - Health and Safety Festival

Safe Thought

"Do your work with pride, put safety in every stride."

EnviroHealth

Plastic Free July 2023

Did you know that the average American uses and throws away 110 pounds, or roughly 50 kilograms, of single-use plastic every year? Plastic pollution has become a major global issue over the last hundred years, with devastating impacts on our ecosystems, wildlife, and human health. The excessive use of single-use plastics, poor recycling systems, and improper disposal practices have led to the accumulation of trillions of tons of plastic waste in our oceans, landfills, and even our air.

Plastic Free July is an annual event that began in Western Australia in 2011 and has spread across the globe. It aims to raise awareness of the amount of plastic in our lives by encouraging people to reduce their reliance on single-use disposable plastic products, reduce plastic pollution, and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis throughout July and beyond. The Plastic Free Foundation encourages people to “Take The Challenge” of reducing their single use plastic consumption at home, at work, at the office, or in their community at large. You don’t have to completely cut out plastic from your life, but any small step taken can to reduce consumption will help lead to a better, greener tomorrow for our community and the world at large.

Here are some simple steps to reduce plastic waste:

Choose to Reuse – There are many reusable alternatives for common single use plastic products, such as reusable water bottles, cloth grocery bags, and glass food containers.

Say No to Plastic Straws and Cutlery – Skip the plastic straws and opt to use one made of bamboo, metal, or glass. Take the extra time to wash reusable forks, spoons, and knives instead of constantly throwing away plastic cutlery.

Be Mindful of Packaging - When shopping, choose products with minimal or plastic-free packaging. Buy from local markets or stores that prioritize sustainable packaging.

Recycle Right – Keep up to date on local recycling guidelines. Not all plastics are made the same, and not all plastic products can be recycled in all locations. All plastic containers should be fully rinsed out before recycling.

Remember, even small changes can lead to significant progress when practiced collectively. Plastic-Free July serves as a reminder that we have the power to make a difference, one plastic-free choice at a time. For more resources on how to have a plastic free July, feel free to visit: [Plastic Free July](#)



Stormwater Quality Knowledge is Power!

One of the most important tools to combat environmental degradation is education. This is true for both global and local issues. The quality of water in our rivers, lakes, and oceans is a critical environmental issue that starts at a local level, but collectively, become a global issue – and can be substantially improved through education.

The degradation of stormwater is the number one contributor to surface water pollution in the United States. Only through a collective effort between government agencies, industry, and the general public can this issue be mitigated. Many pollutants released into surface waters by the general public can be attributed to the lack of awareness. For example, many people think that whatever goes down a storm drain is treated by a water treatment facility. This is not true, whatever goes down the storm drain ends up in our rivers, lakes, and oceans. Because of this misconception, people will dump oil, chemicals, trash, and yard waste into storm drains. There is a proper way to dispose of these items. Bag and dispose of your trash in proper receptacles, oil and chemicals can be disposed of at household hazardous material drop off sites at local waste management center and lawn waste can either be composted or brought to a recycle center. Lack of awareness can also cause harm to our surface waters, without the individual even realizing it. Over fertilizing lawns and not cleaning up yard waste can cause algal blooms in local waterbodies, which starve other plants and animals of oxygen. In the winter, overuse of salts and deicers can runoff into waterways which can kill plants and animals. Not cleaning up dog waste can introduce E. Coli into the watershed.

Everyone is an active participant in preventing stormwater pollution, whether it is actively making sure that pollutants don’t make it to the storm drain or educating others, we all have a responsibility. Please visit [City of Greeley Storm Water](#) for more information.



Health and Wellness

Health and Safety Festival 2023

Please join us for the 16th annual Health and Safety Festival hosted by the UNC Environmental Health and Safety Department on September 13th. This event is free, open to the public, and will take place between 11:30am and 1:30pm in west campus between McKee and Candelaria Hall. You will have the opportunity to see

inside of a medivac helicopter, participate in hands-on demonstrations with the Greeley Fire Department, Greeley Police Bomb Squad, and the Weld County K-9 unit, as well as visit booths from many other health and safety agencies from across Colorado.



Beating Heat Stress and Strain

Summer is finally here, and with it comes high temperatures and heat waves. While sunny weather brings joy and excitement, it also poses serious health risks, particularly heat stress injuries. Heat stress occurs when our bodies struggle to regulate internal temperature, leading to various health problems. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent heat stress and keep ourselves safe during these hot summer days.

Heat stress injuries encompass a range of conditions, from mild heat cramps to severe heat exhaustion and potentially life-threatening heatstroke. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures, combined with poor hydration and limited rest, can significantly increase the risk of heat stress. Workers in outdoor environments, athletes, and individuals who spend prolonged periods outside are particularly susceptible.

1. Stay Hydrated: Proper hydration is paramount to regulating body temperature. Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Water, fruit juices, and sports drinks are excellent choices to replenish lost fluids and electrolytes.

2. Take Frequent Breaks: If you're working or exercising outdoors, ensure you take regular breaks in shaded areas or air-conditioned spaces. This allows your body to cool down and recover from the heat.

3. Dress Appropriately: Opt for loose, lightweight, and light colored clothing to allow air circulation and reflect sunlight.

4. Avoid Sun Exposure: When the sun is at its peak, usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., minimize your time spent outdoors. Seek shade whenever possible, and if you must be outside, use sunscreen with a high SPF to protect your skin from harmful UV rays.

5. Create a Cool Environment: Ensure your living and working spaces are well-ventilated and air-conditioned. If air conditioning is not available, use fans or cool towels to lower the temperature and promote airflow

6. Know the Warning Signs: Educate yourself and those around you about the signs of heat stress. Symptoms can include excessive sweating, dizziness, nausea, headaches, rapid heartbeat, and muscle cramps. If you or someone you know experiences these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

7. Carefully Plan Outdoor Activities: If you're planning outdoor activities, schedule them during cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening. Engage in moderate exercise and listen to your body's cues to avoid overexertion.

Remember, prevention is key when it comes to heat stress injuries. By following these guidelines and being mindful of the risks, you can enjoy the summer while keeping yourself and others safe. Keep an eye out for vulnerable individuals, such as children, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses, as they are more susceptible to heat-related health issues. Let's make this summer a season of fun and relaxation, and above all, stay cool and safe!



Celebrating UV Safety Month This July

As the sun shines brighter and summer activities begin, it's time to celebrate UV Safety Month and raise awareness about the importance of protecting our skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation. As sun exposure increases during the summer months, it is crucial to prioritize our skin's health and take proactive measures to decrease the risk of sun damage and its related health issues.

UV radiation emitted by the sun consists of three types: UVA, UVB, and UVC. UVA rays penetrate deepest into the skin, contributing to premature aging, skin damage, and skin cancer. UVB rays primarily cause topical sunburns and are less penetrating. UVC rays are blocked in the atmosphere by the ozone layer but can be emitted by UV lamps and should always be avoided. Overexposure to UV radiation can lead to various health issues including sunburn, skin cancer, premature aging, and eye damage. By adopting proper UV safety measures, we can significantly reduce these risks and maintain healthier skin.

While practicing UV safety, extend your knowledge to loved ones and the community. Educate others about the importance of UV protection, especially children and young adults who may be more susceptible to sunburns and long-term skin damage. Encourage the use of sunscreen, protective clothing, and shade-seeking behaviors to create a culture of sun safety. Remember, UV safety is a year-round commitment and is not limited to the summer months alone. Make it a habit to protect your skin from the sun's harmful rays every day, regardless of the season. Let's celebrate UV Safety Month this July by nurturing our healthy skin, preventing sun damage, and enjoying the great Colorado outdoors with confidence and peace of mind.



Sun-Safe Tips:

- 1. Wear Sunscreen:** Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher to all exposed skin, including your face, neck, arms, and legs. Reapply every two hours, more frequently if sweating or swimming.
- 2. Cover Up:** Wear protective clothing, such as lightweight long-sleeved shirts, pants, and wide-brimmed hats. This shields your skin from direct UV exposure and help prevent sunburns.
- 3. Find Shade:** The sun's rays are typically strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade under umbrellas, trees, or other sun-protective structures to reduce your overall UV exposure during these times.
- 4. Wear Sunglasses:** Protect your eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB radiation. Look for sunglasses labeled with UV 400 or provide 100% UV protection.
- 5. Be Sun-Smart:** Be mindful of reflective surfaces like water, sand, and snow, as they can intensify UV radiation. Take extra precautions in these environments by applying sunscreen more frequently and wearing appropriate protective gear.
- 6. Avoid Tanning Beds:** Steer clear of artificial sources of UV radiation, such as tanning beds and sunlamps. They emit concentrated UV rays that can be even more damaging to the skin.
- 7. Perform Regular Skin Checks:** Take time to examine your skin regularly, paying attention to any changes in moles, freckles, or other marks. If you notice anything suspicious or concerning, talk with a dermatologist.

Bear in Mind (BIM) is a publication brought to you by your campus Environmental Health and Safety Department (EHS). We are interested in your thoughts and submissions. Contact the [Environmental Health and Safety](#) department at 970-351-1149. Suggestions can also be sent by campus mail attention EHS, Campus Box 57. Bear in Mind issues are published every quarter. Find current and archived issues on-line at the [EHS Website](#).



Parsons Hall
501 20th Street
Campus Box 57
Greeley, CO 80639
Phone: 970-351-2446

It is the mission of the Environmental Health and Safety Department to support university functions by promoting a safe and healthy campus environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors, as well as to provide professional guidance and direction toward compliance with University, Federal, State and local rules and regulations.