



*"Safety Comes First"*

# Case Western Reserve University Environmental Health and Safety

**March-April  
2026**

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*In this issue:*

## *Workplace Violence Awareness Month*

<i>Workplace Violence Awareness Month</i>	1	<p>April is recognized as Workplace Violence Awareness Month by the Alliance Against Workplace Violence (AAWPV). Throughout the month, the AAWPV educates on the signs of workplace violence, as well as the steps for preventing it. On April 28, Workers Memorial Day events honor those who have died while working.</p> <p>According to the National Safety Council (NSC), workplace violence is responsible for thousands of injuries and hundreds of fatalities in the United States each year. Though some industries, including health care, have higher rates of violence, workplace violence can happen to any worker at any job. The potential effects range from short-term physical injuries to long-term psychological damage and even death.</p> <p>The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health organizes workplace violence into four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal intent</li> <li>• Customer or client</li> <li>• Worker-on-worker</li> <li>• Personal relationship</li> </ul> <p>The victims of injury and trauma are overwhelmingly female, while males account for most workplace homicides. Experts agree workers should be prepared with a specific plan to run, hide, or fight in dangerous situations on the job, especially when there's an active shooter.</p> <p>To help prevent workplace violence, employers should develop an emergency action plan, as well as employee training courses about recognizing the warning signs of violence. If coworkers notice excessive use of alcohol or drugs, unexplained absenteeism, withdrawal, or overly emotional responses, they should notify a supervisor. As the AAWPV, during Workplace Violence Awareness Month and throughout the year, advises, if you see something, say something.</p>
<i>Part II: Ensuring Safety in the First Temple of the Atom</i>	2	
<i>National Arbor Day</i>	3	
<i>Contractor and Temporary Worker Safety</i>	4	
<i>Take Proactive Steps on Diabetes Alert Day</i>	6	
<i>Chemical Spotlight: Octane</i>	7	
<i>Fun Page</i>	8	
<i>Staff</i>	9	
2026-2		

## *Part II: Ensuring Safety in the First Temple of the Atom*

As noted in Part I of this story on the NC State research reactor, the Atomic Energy Commission was very anxious to promote the world's first civilian reactor. But its enthusiasm was tempered by the challenge of placing a reactor safely on a busy college campus and developing an approval process for non-AEC reactors.

The AEC turned to its Reactor Safeguard Committee, the forerunner of today's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. The Committee was formed in 1947 to evaluate the safety of new reactors proposed by AEC laboratories and contractors. "The committee was about as popular—and also necessary—as a traffic cop," recalled Safeguard Committee Chairman Edward Teller.

The Committee's most significant contribution was establishing a conservative approach to safety given the engineering uncertainty of that era. "We could not follow the usual method of trial and error," Teller said. "The trials had to be on paper because the actual errors could be catastrophic." The Committee developed a "simple procedure" of challenging a reactor designer to write a "hazard summary report" that imagined the worst "plausible mishap"—soon known as a "maximum credible accident"—and demonstrate the reactor design could prevent or mitigate it.

The Committee focused on several hazards, including a surge in the chain reaction called a reactor "runaway," a catastrophic release of radioactive material from fire, sabotage, or an earthquake, and hazards from routine operation that might result from leaks or inadvertent exposures. The Committee asked NC State to address these concerns in a "hazards summary report."

To meet the Committee's desire for inherent safety, NC State proposed a "water boiler" reactor, which was believed to have "student-proof" safety margin given its strongly "negative coefficient" of reactivity that limited greatly the possibility of a runaway. NC State also developed interlocks and an extremely dense concrete shielding to discourage sabotage.

In order for NC State to commit the funds to such a long-term project, it needed an early approval. This created a dilemma since the college did not yet have a detailed, complete design. The AEC used a two-step conditional approval that was similar to its later construction permit/operating license process. In step one, construction did not begin until NC State addressed the most important design safety issues. When it did, the AEC agreed by contract to supply enriched fuel. The fuel was not delivered, however, until NC State resolved all outstanding safety questions and a final inspection took place. With that, the first civilian reactor in history went critical in September 1953.

The AEC approach to safety at NC State foreshadowed many later regulatory practices. As important as the 1954 Atomic Energy Act is to current regulatory practice, it is interesting to see that many of the critical elements have even deeper roots back toward the beginning of the atomic era.

By Thomas Wellock, NRC Historian



***“The  
(Reactor  
Safeguard)  
Committee  
was formed  
in 1947 to  
evaluate  
the safety  
of new  
reactors  
proposed  
by AEC  
laborato-  
ries and  
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tors.”***

## *National Arbor Day*



*“They  
(Trees)  
clean the  
air and  
water  
around  
them and  
support  
community  
health and  
well-  
being.”*

This year, National Arbor Day will be celebrated in the United States on Friday, April 24, 2026. The holiday was first observed in the 19th century when Nebraska newspaper editor J. Sterling Morton proposed planting trees at the meeting of the State Board of Agriculture. On April 10, 1872, approximately 1 million trees were planted in Nebraska. Today, the Arbor Day



Foundation (ADF) continues Morton’s important work.

Trees are vital to the health of the planet. They clean the air and water around them and support community health and well-being. As a habitat for wildlife and aquatic life, trees also increase biodiversity and help to maintain ecosystem balance. They provide medicine, protection from extreme weather events and heat, and outdoor recreation.

To calculate the overall benefits of planting trees, try the National Tree Benefit Calculator on the ADF website. It lists local tree species, as well as the storm water, property value, energy, air quality, and carbon dioxide benefits of planting a single tree in your yard. For specific planting and program partners, visit the Trees in Communities page on the ADF website.

Because they quickly pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, trees offer an affordable, natural, relatively easy way to reduce the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and therefore climate change. Planting a tree on Arbor Day not only connects you to your community, your state, and your nation but also serves as a global symbol of hope in the future.



## *Contractor and Temporary Worker Safety*

Many workplaces are staffed by workers with different employers—a host company, contractors, and staffing agencies. If you own or operate a facility, you have complete responsibility for the health and safety of your own employees and a shared responsibility for those working for a contractor or staffing agency.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health researchers have found that temporary workers have a higher overall injury rate than permanent workers in the same occupations.

For example, staffing agency nurses have higher rates of sharps injuries than their on-staff hospital coworkers. Temporary workers in plastics manufacturing have twice the injury rate of their coworkers in permanent positions.

### **Multiemployer workplaces**

Host employers and staffing agencies at multiemployer workplaces need to define responsibilities for safety and health compliance and training, requiring a high level of communication and coordination. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can and does cite both host employers and staffing agencies for contract or temporary workers' injuries and hazard exposures, especially in the agency's enforcement of the hazard communication, lockout/tagout, permit-required confined space entry, and personal protective equipment (PPE) standards.

OSHA recommends that safety and health programs at multiemployer workplaces include:

- Effective communication among host employers, contractors, and staffing agencies and information-sharing on workplace hazards and procedures for routine, nonroutine, and emergency hazards; *and*
- Effective coordination, including safety-related specifications in

*(Continued on page 5)*

*“...temporary workers have a higher overall injury rate than permanent workers in the same occupations.”*



## *Contractor and Temporary Worker Safety, cont.*



*(Continued from page 4)*

contracts, harmonizing safety and health programs, and ensuring staffing agency employees are adequately trained and equipped before showing up at the workplace.

Safety and health responsibilities should be clearly spelled out in contracts and communicated to temporary workers. However, you should understand that contract terms with a contractor or staffing agency won't shield you from OSHA inspections and penalties. OSHA considers the staffing agencies and their clients joint employers of temporary workers. Your company and the staffing agency are jointly responsible for providing and maintaining a safe work environment for temporary workers.

Coordinated policies can prevent any safety lapses, while inconsistent policies can lead to poor worker compliance with your safety rules if they begin to question the credibility of those policies. During an inspection, OSHA compliance safety and health officers interview workers and supervisors and observe permanent and temporary workers performing their duties to assess whether workplace training complies with agency standards.

Be mindful that OSHA may impose higher penalties on your company as the host employer than the staffing agency that employs a temporary worker.



***“OSHA considers the staffing agencies and their clients joint employers of temporary workers.”***

## *Take Proactive Steps on Diabetes Alert Day*

On March 24, 2026, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) will observe Diabetes Alert Day, which sounds the alarm about both the prevalence and the risk factors and effects of type 2 diabetes in the United States. According to the ADA, diabetes is a condition whereby the body's glucose or blood sugar levels are higher than normal, resulting in the body's inability to use or store blood glucose for energy. In the United States, more than 38 million children and adults have diabetes, and the national cost of the disease in 2022 was almost \$413 million.

At work, employers can help prevent type 2 diabetes and support employees who are managing diabetes by encouraging physical activity, providing educational workshops, and promoting healthy eating habits in the workplace. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages companies to adjust their work environment or schedule to accommodate employees with diabetes, which reduces absenteeism and increases productivity.

Not only does preventing diabetes and supporting workers with a diagnosis keep businesses in compliance with regulations, but taking a proactive approach also makes sense financially. Diabetes costs companies over \$105 million in indirect costs, such as the inability to work and lost productivity, and more than \$305 million in direct medical costs for treatment and care.

To recognize Diabetes Alert Day, consider these activities:

- Take an online diabetes risk test.
- Talk to your doctor about your risk factors, and have your blood sugar tested.
- Print and hang a colorful nutrition poster in the office or at home as a reminder.
- Start a walking group with coworkers during lunchtime.
- Use #AmericanDiabetesAssociationAlertDay to share news and educational facts.



FOURTH TUESDAY IN MARCH

*“...Diabetes costs companies over \$105 million in indirect costs...”*



## Chemical Spotlight: Octane



*“When working with octane, wear protective clothing and gloves made of nitrile, fluoro-elastomer, or Viton...”*

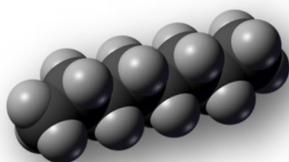
Octane is a clear, colorless liquid with a gasoline-like odor. It’s a flammable chemical used as a solvent or a blowing agent and to make other chemicals.

When possible, transfer octane to tightly closed process containers in an enclosed system. Store the chemical in a cool, well-ventilated area away from oxidizing agents, nitric acid, and combustible materials. Sources of ignition, such as smoking and open flames, are prohibited where octane is used, handled, or stored. Only nonsparking, explosion-proof tools, equipment, and fittings should be used. Metal containers should be grounded and bonded; be aware of possible static electricity accumulation.

When working with octane, wear protective clothing and gloves made of nitrile, fluoroelastomer, or Viton, as well as splash-resistant goggles. Where the potential for exposure over 75 parts per million (ppm) exists, use a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-approved supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece operated in positive-pressure mode.

If octane is spilled or leaked, evacuate anyone who isn’t wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) from the area. Remove all ignition sources. Absorb liquids in vermiculite, dry sand, earth, or a similar material, and deposit in sealed containers. Ventilate and wash the area of the spill or leak, but don’t wash any residue into the sewer because of the possibility of explosion.

It may be necessary to contain and dispose of octane as a hazardous waste. Contact your state environmental regulatory agency or your regional office of the federal EPA for specific recommendations.





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### Safety Quotes

*The  
safest  
risk is  
the one  
you  
didn't  
take.*

*~Author  
Unknown*

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