



## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to announce that with the support of UF Research, EH&S is establishing college-level Environmental Safety and Compliance Officer (ESCO) positions in various colleges to enhance our lab and research safety compliance program. These safety officers will work closely with ADRs, Department Chairs, PIs, and lab staff to provide day-to-day support for their lab operations and keep them in compliance with various EH&S regulations and rules.



EH&S Research Services & Safety is launching a new Lab Hazard Notification Board in early 2025 to manage hazard information digitally, enable real-time updates, and reduce the need to contact EH&S for lab signage updates. In early 2025, we will also be working with the UF research community to implement the new EPA regulation for methylene chloride usage, as well as implementing the first round of 5-year renewals for the Biosafety/IBC project registrations in Gator TRACS.

In addition, we recently launched a new digital permit process for the building code department to streamline the permit application process, reduce cost, and improve overall efficiency. We have also enhanced our occupational medicine program by implementing some great changes to the Biopath Program and the Respirator Program.

As we are approaching the holiday season, it's important to stay safe at home and enjoy your celebrations with family and friends. Please do not forget to follow the Winter Holiday Safety Tips. As always, thank you for your continued support in keeping the UF community safe.

Happy Holidays and be safe!

Regards,  
Shailendra Singh

## NEW ESCOs TO SUPPORT RESEARCH SAFETY PROGRAM

EH&S is excited to announce several new key positions within the University of Florida: the Environmental Safety and Compliance Officers (ESCO). These roles will serve as embedded safety professionals in colleges to enhance their lab and research safety compliance programs. Allocated by the Office of Research and centrally funded through UF EH&S, the ESCO positions will support EH&S services and programs in the following colleges, ensuring our research activities meet the highest safety standards.

- Dr. Raies Mir, ESCO: College of Veterinary Medicine
- Devin Leonard, ESCO: Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
- Ethan Church, ESCO: Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
- Dr. Nicholas Cavallaro, ESCO: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Dr. Laurence Prunetti, ESCO: College of Medicine (effective 1/3/25)
- Alek Aranyos, ESCO: College of Medicine (effective 2/14/25)

Please join us in congratulating these individuals on their new positions. Their presence reflects the University's continued commitment to creating a safe and compliant research environment for all.

## LAB SAFETY DOOR SIGNS

We're excited to announce that EH&S is launching a new **Laboratory Hazard Notification Board** in early 2025. This new system allows lab personnel to easily manage and update hazard information digitally, enabling real-time updates and reducing the need to contact EH&S for signage changes.

We are currently testing this new system with a handful of labs and will start campus-wide implementation by March 2025. At that time, EH&S will provide the wall mount sleeve and instructions on how to update the lab notice board during the annual safety survey.

Information on how to update the lab notice board can be found on the EH&S website by clicking the button below. Labs are welcome to transition to the new sign at any point prior to their next safety survey.

**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA** HAZARD NOTIFICATION

Ally Color: 352-123-4567 No  
 Person Contact Name: [Redacted] Phone Number: [Redacted] Primary Contact for this hazard? No  
 Lab Manager: 352-000-0000 December 1, 2024  
 Secretary Contact Name: [Redacted] Phone Number: [Redacted] Date Last Updated: [Redacted]

**Entry Requirements**

Eye Protection  Long Pants or Skirt  Full Coverage Shoes  No Food or Drink  No Smoking

**Hazards Present**

Health Hazard  Flammables  Corrosives  Compressed Gas  Cryogenics  BSL-2

**Additional Information**

Cell Requirements: remove PPE and wash hands prior to exiting the lab (the use of one clean glove is acceptable when transporting samples out of the lab).

Review hazard assessments and SOPs for additional PPE requirements when working.

Emergencies: 911  
 EH&S: 352-392-1595 Scan for instructions and more information about  
 Worker's Comp: 1-800-455-2079 notice boards:  
 Other:

### NEW LAB SIGNAGE

## NEW REGULATION FOR METHYLENE CHLORIDE COMING SOON

In April 2024, the EPA finalized a rule under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to regulate methylene chloride (dichloromethane, DCM) use, aiming to reduce health risks like neurotoxicity and cancer from inhalation or dermal exposure. This regulation will phase out most uses of methylene chloride, impacting manufacturers, importers, processors, distributors, and users—including universities.

Workplaces currently using methylene chloride must comply within 18 months of the rule's finalization. Compliance includes periodic monitoring to ensure worker safety from exposure. EH&S Research Services is working on developing some guidelines to implement these changes.



Details on implementing this new regulation at UF will be shared soon. For more information, visit the [EPA Rule](#) or check out the [Fact Sheet](#).

### MORE INFORMATION

# BIOHAZARD PROJECT RENEWALS

UF's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) requires Biohazard Project Registrations to be renewed every five years to comply with NIH regulations. Projects submitted through GatorTRACS in 2019 are now reaching expiration, and renewal notifications are being sent to Principal Investigators.



To renew, use the "New Renewal" button in GatorTRACS, which copies project details for resubmission and review. Only use this option for expired projects. For other updates, use the "New Amendment" button.

To check expiration dates, filter by "Complete" and view the "Permit Expiration Date" column. Contact the Biosafety Office with any questions.

GATOR TRACS

# BUILDING CODE DEPARTMENT GOES DIGITAL WITH PERMITTING

The UF Building Code Department is adopting a new digital permit process, starting with tent and temporary building permits. Key benefits include:

- Streamlined applications with online forms and instructions.
- Reduced paper use and manual processing.
- Notifications when permits are ready online.
- Convenient online payments for contractors.
- Remote access to all documents through the portal.



Please contact the UF Building Code Department at (352) 392-1591 with any questions.

PERMIT APPLICATION

# NEW CHANGES TO BIOPATH AND RESPIRATOR PROGRAMS

UF EH&S has implemented changes to the Biopath Program and the Respirator Program. We are excited to announce a new partnership with 3M which includes an online respirator clearance exam. Also, Biopath clearances for any UF personnel working in BSL3 laboratories will be conducted by a new external vendor.



EH&S will provide more information and instructions during the Biopath enrollment process. If you have any questions, please reach out to Tara Hetsler at (352) 392-1591 for more information.

REQUEST MORE INFORMATION

# FULL STEAM AHEAD INTO THE HOLIDAYS!

Thanksgiving is behind us, and we hope everyone enjoyed a delicious feast. As the holiday season continues, it's never too late to start planning for your next celebration. Thoughtful preparation is key—whether you're decorating, cooking, or traveling.



Here are some tips to ensure a safe and joyful holiday:

- **Decorations:** Use only approved decorations and always follow the manufacturer's recommendations and safety instructions.
- **Shopping & Travel:** Plan your shopping trips carefully, allowing extra time for travel and preparation. Avoid rushing to ensure safety on the roads and in stores.
- **Cooking Safety:** If you're cooking, never leave the stove unattended. While it's fun to gather for movies or share family memories, remember to keep an eye on your kitchen!

For more holiday fire safety tips, visit the National Fire Protection Association website at [NFPA.org](https://www.nfpa.org). The EH&S Fire Safety Team wishes you a safe and memorable holiday season!

## SPACE HEATER SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE



Space heater safety in the workplace is crucial to ensure a comfortable and secure environment for all employees. While space heaters can provide necessary warmth during colder months, they also pose potential risks if not used properly. To mitigate hazards, it's essential that space heaters maintain a clearance of at least three feet from any objects.

When selecting a space heater, look for advanced safety features such as:

- A **built-in automatic overheating protection system**, which will shut the unit off if the internal components overheat.
- A **tip-over switch** ensures that the heater will turn off if it is tipped forward or backward, providing an extra layer of safety.
- Ensure that space heater cords are **directly plugged into the wall outlet** and not into extension cords or power strips, as this can reduce the risk of overheating. Regularly inspect cords for wear and tear.
- Select heaters that are **UL or ETL certified** and **utilize ceramic plates** instead of open coils or oils, minimizing the risk of burns and fires.

Remember, due to fire hazards or regulations, space heaters are NOT to be used in laboratories, healthcare facilities, or other prohibited locations. The purchase of any space heater must be approved prior to ordering.

### EQUIPMENT PURCHASE APPROVAL

## UPCOMING GATOR TRACS TRAINING SESSIONS

EH&S will resume live Gator TRACS training sessions in January 2025. Gator TRACS is EH&S's cloud-based platform that manages research safety programs and compliance requirements. This training is



geared toward Principal Investigators and Lab Managers who need assistance maintaining lab rosters, tracking training, completing annual hazard assessments, viewing survey reports, and closing corrective actions. Upcoming Zoom sessions are listed below:

- Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10 am
- Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 10 am
- Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm
- Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 10 am
- Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 am
- Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 3 pm



**GATOR TRACS**

If you are interested in attending, please register through the [myTraining website](#) by searching the course code **EHS883** and selecting your preferred training date.

Additional information regarding the Gator TRACS platform can be found on the [EH&S website](#).

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## SAFETY REMINDERS

### **Are you closing, vacating, relocating, transferring, or renovating a laboratory?**

Don't forget to report your lab closeout to EH&S! Notification is required at least thirty days (30) in advance by submitting the online [Lab Closeout Form](#).

### **Are you planning to purchase lab equipment?**

Lab appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, 3D printers, heaters, and microwaves need prior approval from EH&S before being purchased. Please use the [Equipment Purchasing Approval Form](#) to submit requests.

### **Are you generating hazardous waste?**

Do not fill liquid waste containers completely to the top. *Overfilling can be hazardous to University students, employees, visitors, facilities, and the environment.* Please leave a small amount of head space to allow for expansion of the liquid due to temperature changes (especially during transport).

- 20 L × 15 °C temp increase = as much as 400 mL volume increase for common solvents.
- Best Practices – Leave a 5% void in cans and carboys.
- Best Practices – Only fill 4 L bottles to shoulder.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



### **Josh Muok**

Receptionist

Environmental Health & Safety

We are excited to welcome Josh Muok as our new Receptionist in the EH&S Administrative Office. Josh brings valuable experience to his role, having previously worked as a receptionist at Santa Fe College and as an administrative assistant at a naval military base in his hometown of Pensacola. He is currently completing his bachelor's degree in Political Science.

In his role at EH&S, Josh answers and directs phone calls to the appropriate personnel, coordinates campus-wide pest control work orders, and assists with daily office tasks. He also helps foster a welcoming environment for EH&S staff.

## CONTACT

Outside of work, Josh enjoys staying active through running, working out, and playing basketball and pickleball. In his free time, he loves watching movies and sports games with friends.



### **Dr. Raies Mir**

**Environmental Safety & Compliance Officer (ESCO)  
College of Veterinary Medicine**

EH&S is thrilled to welcome Dr. Raies Mir as an Environmental Safety and Compliance Officer (ESCO) for the College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Mir holds a DVM, an MS in Veterinary Medicine, and a PhD in Animal Science from the University of Florida. He previously worked as a Biosafety Officer and Qualified Trainer in the pharmaceutical industry, specializing in lab safety and compliance.

In his role as an ESCO, Dr. Mir will develop safety committees, ensure lab and research compliance, and collaborate with EH&S to address biosafety, lab safety, and chemical safety needs for the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Outside of work, Dr. Mir enjoys fishing, playing cricket, and spending time with his wife and kids at home.

## CONTACT



### **Ethan Church**

**Environmental Safety & Compliance Officer (ESCO)  
Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences**

EH&S extends a warm welcome to Ethan Church, one of our new Environmental Safety & Compliance Officers (ESCO), serving as a liaison for the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). Ethan's role will focus on improving the safety and health of those conducting and supporting research within IFAS.

Ethan earned a Bachelor of Science in Forest Resource Management with a minor in Soil and Water Sciences from UF and is set to graduate with a Master of Health Science in Environmental and Global Health, specializing in One Health, in May 2025. He brings experience from his time at the UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants and as an Environmental Health Specialist for the Florida Department of Health in Levy County.

In his free time, Ethan enjoys outdoor activities like hiking and fishing.

## CONTACT

### **New Hires**

Josh Muok, *Receptionist*  
Daniel Nunez, *EH&S Cdr. I: Lab Safety*  
Dr. Raies Mir, *ESCO*  
Ethan Church, *ESCO*

### **Promotions**

Donald Porter, *Bldng Code Inspct II: ADA Compliance*  
Jacob McCartney, *Hazardous Materials Specialist II*  
Anna Gioseffi, *EH&S Cdr. II*  
Seth Mullins, *EH&S Cdr I: Radiation Safety*

### **Anniversaries**

Bradley Files, 15 Years  
Gary Heil, 15 Years  
Michael Burnett, 10 Years  
Devin Leonard, 5 Years  
*Thank you for your years of service at UF!*

Follow us on social media and help promote #UFSafetyCulture



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