



# The Safety Net

Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University Environmental Health & Safety Newsletter

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### Special Interest Articles:

- Charge into Fire Safety
- Stay Aware, Stay Safe
- SciShield & SciSure updates
- EHS Training

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## Artificial Intelligence in Environmental Health & Safety



Artificial intelligence (AI) has catapulted Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) into a new realm by shifting the field from reactive to proactive practices through predictive risk management. In the past, EHS relied primarily on manual processes, such as paper records and human-driven analysis, resulting in inefficiencies, delayed responses, and knowledge gaps. Recent advances in AI, machine learning, and data analytics have unlocked new potential in many ways, including automated data collection, real-time monitoring, and deeper insights into workplace and environmental risks. AI-powered systems analyze data using sensors, inspections, images, and historical records to improve hazard recognition and risk assessment

AI systems can effectively identify unsafe conditions, improper PPE use, and emerging environmental hazards enabling organizations to predict equipment failures, chemical releases, and improper exposures before incidents occur. These developments represent a significant shift from responsive measures to incidents to potentially preventing them altogether.

In addition to its vast capabilities, it also strengthens environmental protection and regulatory compliance through enabling continuous monitoring of air and water quality, emissions, and noise levels. AI-driven platforms can detect anomalies, flag potential violations, automate reporting, and ensure consistency across facilities. The combination of past and present advancements marks a significant evolution in EHS, enhancing prevention efforts, improving compliance, protecting the environment, and better safeguarding workers.

## Earth Day 2026



This year, Earth Day will take place on Wednesday, April 22, 2026. Earth Day brings unionization worldwide, mobilizing over one billion people across the globe to protect our planet and continuing a movement that began in 1970, when millions demanded cleaner air, water, and healthier communities. Under the theme 'Our Power, Our Planet,' this year aims to highlight how collective action through climate action, conservation, renewable energy, and education can benefit

There are a plethora of ways people can join in the fun of caring for the planet. From fighting plastic pollution and promoting sustainable fashion to climate education, anyone can participate by joining community activities such as cleanups, tree plantings, signing petitions, and attending community events. Be sure to check out Earth Day News & Stories, Renewable Energy, End Plastics, Climate Education, Sustainable Fashion, Climate Action, and Conservation & Biodiversity to learn how to get involved and make a lasting impact.

### Latest Earth Day Stories:

- **Animals Who Inherited the Fairy Tale Forests** (*Jan 9, 2026*) – Discover the rare wildlife that depends on old-growth forests, one of Earth's most threatened and irreplaceable ecosystems.
- **Fever Trees and Forest Pharmacies** (*Jan 5, 2026*) – Learn how forests provide lifesaving medicines and why protecting biodiversity is critical to human health.
- **The Truth About Tea** (*Jan 2, 2026*) – With over 3 billion cups consumed daily, explore how tea production connects global culture, sustainability, and climate.
- **A World Without Plastics Already Existed** (*Dec 29, 2025*) – A look at how societies thrived for thousands of years before plastic and what we can relearn today.

Earth Day Link: <https://www.earthday.org/>

## Lab Safety Awareness Week 2026: Building a Safer Campus Together

Lab Safety Awareness Week (LSAW) is taking place from February 9 to 13, 2026. The week emphasizes the importance of robust laboratory safety programs that protect faculty, staff, and students. In collaboration with CSHEMA, the week offers resources and activities to promote hazard awareness, injury prevention, and a culture of safety across all lab environments.

Departments are encouraged to participate in the CSHEMA LSAW Awards, recognizing innovative safety initiatives. Submissions are due March 31, 2026.

### Highlights include:

- Educational safety posters (English & Spanish)
- Interactive activities (LSAW Bingo, virtual escape rooms, safety checklists)
- Engagement opportunities (Lab Safety Mascot & Photo Competitions)
- Additional resources (podcasts, social media content, team spotlights)

## EHS Trend Report

The 2026 EHS Trend Report indicates that Environmental Health and Safety is transforming from mere compliance to an essential for performance, resilience, and reputation. In the face of AI, organizations are now tasked with meeting demands for new standards, supply chain transparency, and workforce well-being. Essentially, EHS leaders are being asked to do more now than ever with the availability of smarter tools and better data. In 2026, safety programs are powered by technology, real-time insights, and closer alignment with executive decision-making.

In contrast, the definition of workplace safety is expanding, making EHS standards ever-changing. Physical hazards, mental health, remote work risks, and connected-worker technologies are converging into a more comprehensive approach to protecting people. The future of EHS will focus on prevention, prediction, and worker resilience, making safety proactive rather than reactive.

### Key EHS Trends:

- AI-driven safety systems will predict and prevent incidents using real-time hazard detection and analytics.
- EHS + Environmental Social and Governance integration will connect safety data to sustainability goals, business key performance indicators, and enterprise risk management.
- Worker well-being encompasses mental health, ergonomics, psychological safety, and physical protection.
- Wearables and smart PPE will monitor fatigue, exposure, and environmental risks in real time.
- Drones, robotics, and AR/VR training will reduce human exposure and improve safety training.
- Digital incident reporting will replace paper forms with real-time, mobile, and multilingual updates

## HVAC CLOSURE FOR REPLACEMENT

**Roof Air Conditioner (RAC) Three replacement** will begin on **Monday, January 13, 2025**, and will continue through the **mid-to-end of March**. This will affect the **second and third floors**, mainly the **middle offices and laboratories to the left of the elevators**.

**RAC Two replacement** will begin **after April 1** and will also affect the **second and third floors**, specifically the **middle offices and laboratories located to the right of the elevators**.

**Fume hoods will be impacted during HVAC shutdowns**. This timeline does not account for possible errors or delays.

If you have questions, please contact **Bob Fry**, the **project superintendent**, at **757-323-3167**. He will be in **Lewis 3054** for the duration of the project.

For **assistance with fume hoods**, please contact **EH&S at 757-446-5798** or visit us in **Lewis Hall, room 2142**.

## Ask the S.O.B.

**Q: Dear S.O.B.,** With the HVAC system shut down, my office is uncomfortable. I brought in a space heater and a portable air conditioner but was told they may not be allowed. Why?

**A:** Portable heaters and AC units can create serious fire and electrical hazards if they are not properly approved. **Only UL-certified** equipment is permitted in offices. UL certification indicates that the unit has passed rigorous testing for fire, shock, and overheating risks within its specific category.

Approved heaters must include tip-over protection, overheat shutoff, and proper grounding or double insulation. They must also be kept at least three feet from combustible materials such as paper, furniture, and curtains.

Extension cords are prohibited because heaters and AC units draw high electrical loads that can cause cords to overheat and ignite.

For temporary temperature control during HVAC shutdowns, please **contact the Facilities Department for assistance.**

Contact Information: [757-446-5903](tel:757-446-5903)



*Safety Office Boy to the rescue!*

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## Notes from the Office

### *EH&S Training Courses.*

Course	Date/Time	Location
Chemical Hygiene Plan	February 19, 2026 - 9:30 am March 19, 2026 - 9:30 am April 16, 2026 - 9:30 am	LLewis Hall 2162 Lewis Hall 2162 Lewis Hall 2162
Radiation Safety in the Laboratory	Contact EH&S	757-446-5798
Biosafety in the Laboratory Biological Materials Shipping Autoclave Safety Training OHSP Training Respiratory Protection	Available on SciShield!	<a href="https://evms.scishield.com/">https://evms.scishield.com/</a>