Welcome Note (By Farouk Merhebi – EHSRM Director)

Dear Readers,

The summer season has just arrived and AUB Community started enjoying the sun and the beach. At EHSRM, we make sure that the AUB beach is safe for users by conducting regular safety inspections and weekly testing of the seawater for bacteriological contamination to ensure that the seawater is safe for swimming.

As part of its greening efforts, EHSRM is working on a project to transform “Ada Dodge Hall” to a Green building. Greening measures include replacing of regular faucets with water saving ones, increasing energy efficiency in the building, improving recycling of all types of wastes, making use of renewable energy for water heating and energy generation. Some of these initiatives have recently been financed by private sponsors.

To expand its services further, EHSRM is testing the grounds for a new cooperation with AUBMC Core Lab for the provision of external environmental testing services. These include indoor air quality monitoring (PM, COx, NOx, SOx, etc), asbestos sampling and testing, noise and radiation detection.

EHSRM is currently hosting 5 interns from the FHS Environmental Health Program as part of their undergraduate practicum course. The interns are working during the 6 week internship on several topics including improving waste recycling at AUB, calculation of AUB’s water footprint, radiation protection, chemical management and life and fire safety.

Article of the Month

Beach Safety

During the summer season, beaches and swimming pools provide wonderful opportunities for family and friends to gather and have fun. Unfortunately, beaches and pools are also dangerous places where many injuries and drowning occur each and every year. This article presents some safety tips and steps to be followed to ensure safety at the beach.

- Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards and always swim with a buddy.
- Learn the flag warning system at your beach.
- Don’t dive headfirst, protect your neck. Check for depth and obstructions before diving, and go in feet first for the first time.
- Never leave young children unattended near water.
- Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear approved life jackets around water.
- Have appropriate equipment, such as reaching or throwing equipment, life jackets, a first aid kit and a cell phone. Know who to call in cases of emergency.
- Protect your skin from direct sunlight. Wear sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 15.
- Drink plenty of water regularly.
- Alcohol and Swimming Do Not Mix. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair your judgment, balance, and coordination. Alcohol affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body’s ability to stay warm. Alcohol can make you take risks at the beach that could lead to serious injury or death.
- Don’t allow your family to just sit on the beach or stay in the water all day long. Fatigue, sunburn, heat exhaustion and heat stroke can all become problems. For your health and safety, take frequent breaks from the sun and water.
- If possible, check published information about water quality before swimming.
- Many birds, turtles and marine life forms often wash up on beaches. Do not get too close and above all, do not touch the organism. You may hurt the creature or it may hurt you!
- Put on thongs when you are walking on the sand - sand can be hot enough to burn your feet. Sometimes there may be sharp stones, broken glass or even needles buried in the sand.
- Ask about rip currents at your beach. Rip currents account for the majority of near-drowning in seas. While rip currents are very strong, they are extremely narrow, do not last long, and will not travel very far “out to sea”. If rips are present, don’t go in the water. If unexpectedly caught in a rip, don’t panic. Breathe deep and gently swim parallel to shore. Don’t fight the current – it will wear you out!

Think Safe

1. One way to keep young children safe in the water when you can’t stay close by is to have them wear inflatable arm bands or “water wings.”
   a) True b) False

2. This is the right order of actions to take if you see someone drowning: shout for help, reach or throw a rescue or flotation device, call for emergency if needed.
   a) True b) False

Answers are on page 2

Beach Safety Tips

- The sunscreen’s (SPF) ranges from 2 to 50+ and refers to the product’s ability to block out the sun’s harmful rays. SPF protection does not increase proportionally. While an SPF of 2 will absorb 50% of UV radiation, an SPF of 15 absorbs 93% and an SPF of 34 absorbs 97%.
- Skin type affects the degree and time of skin burns. FDA classifies skin type on a scale from 1 to 6. Individuals with lower number skin types (1 & 2) have fair skin and tend to burn rapidly and more severely. Individuals with skin types (5 & 6), though capable of burning, have darker skin and do not burn as easily.
1. False. Inflatable devices, such as water wings, swim rings or other flotation devices, are not substitutes for approved life jackets. Weak and inexperienced swimmers should wear approved life jackets and remain under constant supervision.

2. True. If you see a swimmer in distress, shout for help, reach or throw a rescue or flotation device. Know who to call in cases of emergency.

Answers to “Think Safe”

The Environmental and Chemical Safety Unit conducted laboratory inspections in Agriculture; offered chemical handling training during nursing orientation; monitored the removal of asbestos containing vinyl tiles in DTS; removed chemical waste from DTS & Agriculture; conducted construction site safety inspections in DTS, Main Gate and Hariri buildings and beach safety inspections; reviewed PLM’s waste management policies; conducted chemical spill drills in PLM; conducted an assessment for improvement of waste segregation in PLM and Dialysis; and reviewed and inspected student activities and events.

The Health Physics Services Unit responded to several calls to convey contamination surveys in several departments at AUBMC where radioactive materials are used for therapy or diagnostics; reviewed import licenses for radioactive materials being transported to Nuclear medicine and PET facilities and followed up on their receiving process; responded to many emergencies for radioactive spills in EMU and NM and carried a major decontamination procedure in Iodine Therapy unit; monitored the flow of several patients in AUBMC after being given radioactive materials in the Nuclear Medicine unit.

The Life and Fire Safety Unit reviewed several material submittals and conducted several site inspections and coordination meetings in DTS and IOEC; reviewed several in-house renovation projects at AUB and AUBMC; concluded the testing of the motorized smoke fire dampers and the fire alarm devices on the 3rd floor of DTS; reviewed several material submittals and shop drawings of fire fighting system, fire alarm system and fire stop of the Academic and Clinical Center (ACC) project; took part in the outdoors event; and reviewed the fire alarm scenario of the Kesserwan Medical Center (KMC) clinics.

The Occupational Safety Unit conducted the Semi-Annual Life and Fire Safety round across AUBMC buildings; provided fire safety training for staff, volunteers, and new residents; conducted two general safety rounds and conveyed observed items to the concerned units.

The Risk Management Unit followed up on many inquires related to injuries and incidents; and offered training on sharps safety during GME orientation and on incident reporting during AUBMC HR orientation.

The Sanitation and Biosafety Unit commissioned & recertified BSCs at DTS; conducted N95 fit testing for nursing staff; reviewed washer/disinfector bid for CSD; conducted universal precautions & biological spill drill training session for PLM staff; offered HAZMAT training during GME orientation; conducted a food safety training session for AUB Outdoors club members; participated in the waste segregation round at PLM; arranged for the collection and testing of water samples from AUBMC, Campus, and seawater from AUB beach; and followed up with CHSC regarding pool water quality.

Hadi Noureddine
Mr. Noureddine joined AUBMC in 1998 as a store keeper in the operating rooms. Then moved into the radiology department as a receptionist till he became the coordinator for patient transport in 2012. Hadi is an active and dedicated member of the emergency response team at AUB/AUBMC since 2005. In 2012, he was the first to respond to a fire alarm in Building 23, first floor. At his presence the fire was already extended to the ceiling and the lamps in the walls but he was able to extinguish the fire all by himself before the other team members joined.

Toni Boutros Assaf
Mr. Assaf joined AUB in 2001 as Jafet Library Assistant and works during the evening and night shifts. Toni joined ERT in 2006 after realizing the unique value AUB gives to rescue teams. He attended one of the biggest fire emergencies at AUBMC couple of years ago. The fire took place on the 1st floor of Phase 2, and he took the initiative and used the high pressure water hose of the firemen of Beirut Fire Department who joined to help. Toni was also one of the first responders to the fire that took place on the roof of Nicely Hall in 2014. He is well recognized by his peers for his courage and work ethics.