Welcome Note  (By Farouk Merhebi – EHSRM Director)

Dear Readers,

As a follow up on the waste crisis, EHSRM Director took part in the Experts’ Committee that assisted the Minister of Agriculture to propose immediate solution to this crisis and develop a strategy for long term sustainability in this sector. The plan consisted of 3 levels: immediate, intermediate and long term solutions and called for the decentralization in the provision of waste management services leaving the choices and finances to the Municipalities. At AUB, EHSRM Director was involved in presenting the plan during the debate called for by the Issam Fares Institute, took part in the workshop for the Baldati-Bi’at program organized by the Nature Conservation Center and contributed to the road mapping workshop held by the AUB waste management task force. Moreover, being the leader of one of the task forces, EHSRM proposed a roadmap towards zero waste at AUB that will be submitted it to the Board of Deans for approval. In addition, EHSRM developed a video on waste recycling that was disseminated across Campus.

In its efforts to spread the safety culture across campus, EHSRM organized, in collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine, the “DTS Safety Week” at the end of October. This week consisted of conducting several safety trainings to raise the level of emergency preparedness for staff and included live classroom sessions but at the same time keeping it fun. The activities consisted of a fashion show for PPEs, lunch and learn sessions, First Aid Training, games, Q&As, and prizes for the most safety-compliant labs. Safety messages and tips were also presented on LCD screens.

EHSRM also assisted FEA in its ABET accreditation inspection by conducting lab safety inspections to all labs and providing immediate recommendation to improve safety in the labs.

Article of the Month

Stopping the Spread of Germs at Work

Nowadays people are becoming more aware of the risk of germs in the restrooms; however, areas at workplace like desktops and break rooms still have not received the same degree of attention despite the fact that University of Arizona studies showed that the office desk can harbor 400 times more bacteria than a toilet seat!

Every day at work, we touch objects or materials that might be harboring germs, bacteria or viruses causing infectious diseases. Germs can be everywhere on doorknobs, cellphones, light switches, keyboards, microwave and refrigerator door handles, and others. Studies confirm that surfaces in personal work spaces such as offices or cubicles have higher bacteria levels than surfaces in common areas. Moreover, a small area on the desk or phone can host millions of bacteria.

One of the interesting facts about office hygiene is that women have more germs on telephones, computer keyboards, computer mice and pens, but men’s desks have more bacteria overall than women’s desks!

Stopping the spreading of germs at work is very important especially during the cold/flu season to protect yourself and others from getting sick. Below are some tips to follow:

- Do not sneeze into your hand. Use a tissue or raise your arm up to your face and aim for your sleeve; throw away tissues as soon as you use them.
- Avoid touching face, eyes, nose, and mouth. Experts believe people might get the flu by touching the surface or object of something that has the flu virus on it and then touching their face, eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay home when sick if possible, or keep distance from others to protect your coworkers and others around you from getting sick.
- Avoid close contact to better contain germs and prevent them from spreading.
- Wash your hands frequently. Be sure to use warm water and enough soap to create a lather especially that it is the soap combined with a scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs. Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.
- Try not to eat at your desk since this can introduce bacteria from your desk to your body via your mouth. In addition, food crumbs can accumulate and provide a breeding ground for bacteria.
- Clean your workplace regularly and focus on the items you handle the most i.e. keyboard, mouse, pens, telephone, desk surface, doorknobs, light switches, etc. noting that cold or flu germs can live for a long time (up to 48 hours) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables. To clean the keyboard, blow compressed air over it then clean the surface with a sanitizer.

Hand Washing Facts

- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Hand sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs and may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Sanitizers are less effective than soap and water because people may not use enough or may wipe it off before it has dried.
- Do not share hand towels since they are great breeding grounds and/or retainers of all kinds of stuff, especially skin surface critters.
Researchers swabbed 390 mobile phones and found that almost every one harbored bacteria. Shockingly, 1 in 6 phones has fecal matter on them.

The same money might be held in different people hands so one bill can have around 135,000 BACTERIA

Answers to “Think Safe”

1. a. You can also hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
   b. Washing your hand regularly is the best way especially that 80% of infectious diseases are transmitted by touch.
   a. Check the below illustration for other parts that can be missed during handwashing.

Recycling Corner

The total number of recycled bottles and cans using the ReVa reverse machines at AUB was till the end of October 2015:

291882

This is equivalent to saving 105,077 kWh of energy, and reducing AUB Carbon’s Footprint by 10,945 Tons of CO2.

EHSRM in Action

The Environmental and Chemical Safety Unit completed lab and shop inspections and rating in IOEC; conducted chemical handling training for NFSC & CSRL and chemical spill response training for PLM staff; supervised the removal of asbestos containing steam pipes in Bechtel and vinyl tiles in Van Dyck; conducted construction safety inspections in DTS and Bechtel and beach safety inspections; escorted FHS students to a site visit at the power plant, laundry and PPD shops; removed chemical waste from DTS, Agriculture & IOEC; and completed the bid evaluation for chemical waste disposal.

The Health Physics Services Unit arranged for the Radiation Safety Committee meeting, performed leak test of sealed sources, provided training to Physics students and Cardiology fellows, approved the internal licenses for 5 PIs; reviewed the patient’s instruction booklet for iodine treatment; reviewed the HAZMAT annual report; followed up with MOPH on LAEC licenses for 3 departments at AUB; prepared for the acquisition of new radionuclides; assisted LAEC in their survey at AUBMC; supervised the collection of radioactive waste at AUBMC; provided recommendations for the lead glass in CT; responded to 3 emergencies; supervised the maintenance activities in 1045; and provided guidance for lutetium treatment.

The Life and Fire Safety Unit reviewed submittals and conducted several site inspections and coordination meetings related to the DTS, IOEC and Bechtel projects; reviewed in-house renovation projects at AUB and AUBMC; concluded the testing of the fire detection and alarm system in Penrose building; took part in coordination and site meetings and reviewed several material submittals and shop drawings of fire fighting, fire alarm, HVAC and Dry wall systems, elevators, and ADA related equipment and features for the ACC project; conducted doors and hardware workshops for B5, L3, L4, and L5 of the ACC; reviewed and tested LPG equipment for the IOEC Cafeteria; took part in a Life and Fire safety requirements meeting of the Masri Institute; and issued LPG and kitchen protection requirements for KMC. Conducted Fire safety sessions for AUB Dorms’ residents.

The Sanitation and Biosafety Unit conducted Fire safety sessions for AUB Dorms’ residents.

The Risk Management Unit followed up on many inquiries related to injuries and incidents; prepared and submitted the AUBMC Annual Incidents Report; and offered training sessions regarding sharps safety during nursing orientation and incidents reporting during AUBMC HR orientation.

The Sanitation and Biosafety Unit conducted N95 fit testing for PLM and Diagnostic Radiology staff; conducted HAZMAT session for AUBMC staff and biosafety training sessions for the NFSC and Biology students; participated in meetings about CSD layout at ACC and about Cell Culture lab layout at Biology Dept.; reviewed and provided recommendations for students food sale event and conducted inspection visits to Campus cafeterias; provided assistance in the AUB recycling project; followed up on the Ministry of Agriculture project regarding pesticide application on Campus and participated in the rounds for the insect killers installation at AUBMC; and arranged for the collection and testing of the Campus, AUBMC and beach water samples.

The Occupational Safety Unit improved on the Emergency preparedness notification system and provided assistance to AUBMC departments in updating their online call lists; followed up with various departments to ensure corrective action for violations observed during the semiannual life and fire safety round; and assisted in the Infant abduction drill preparation and execution.

Meet the Emergency Response Team (ERT)

Khaled Moulla

Mr. Moulla joined AUB in 1987 as a life guard, and moved to the Physical Plant Department to become dispatcher in 1998. Although Khaled joined the ERT only one year ago, he proved during a short period of time to be a highly motivated and well dedicated person.

Khaled recalls that midnight when he was taking care of one of his close family members who was admitted to the hospital, and he received a call for a fire in the dining room restaurant. He rushed to the fire scene, assisted in extinguishing the fire, and helped in silencing the fire alarm system which was ringing continuously.

Charbel Costantine

Mr. Costantine joined the Physical Plant Department at AUB in 2004 as a plumber. In 2006, he shifted to night attendant in the same department, and was selected to join the ERT. Ever since, Charbel played a major role in responding effectively to emergencies occurring during the night shift.

Charbel remembers a call he received in June 2008 at 2:30 am for an incident that happened in the Physics Department. When he arrived to the scene, Charbel could barely spot the UPS catching fire due to the thick smoke that was spreading all over the place. Charbel speaks proudly about the effort he put while responding to that fire and his contribution in putting it off.