

February 2008



Upcoming Events:

EHSO Meeting
Bronx Community College
March 13, 2008
12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

**Medgar Evers College 13th
Annual Environmental Issues
Conference**
Saturday, March 8th, 2008

NYCER Meeting
TBD
March 25, 2008
12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

**SESHA Spring 2008
Conference**
Port Jefferson, Long Island
April 10th and 11th, 2008

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CUNY EHS News

Focus the Nation Swept the Nation and Hunter College

This article describes Hunter College's participation in Focus the Nation, a national environmental teach-in, at the end of January.

By Carina Molnar

On January 31st, Hunter College took part in what was dubbed the largest teach-in in American history. *Focus the Nation: Global Warming Solutions for America* was born as a call to create dialogue and engage millions of students across the country in important

environmental decisions that must be made now. As the organizers stated, "In the next few years, we as a nation will make, or fail to make, critical decisions regarding global warming pollution and clean technology investments. These decisions will have far-reaching and irreversible impacts on the lives of today's students and the lives of their children."

The timing of *Focus the Nation*, January 31st, was intentional. With primary season just heat-

ing up, it was the right time to put pressure on local and national politicians. Hundreds of politicians endorsed the day of educational action. Here at Hunter College, our event concluded with an intimate discussion with State Senator Liz Krueger about her work as a New York State legislator. She reminded students to bring their concerns directly to her and other politicians, and to hold them accountable as public officials. She also expressed *(continued on page 2)*

Ergonomics - A Better Way to Work

This article highlights the hidden musculoskeletal dangers of prolonged, repetitive actions required of office workers, and outlines techniques to minimize risks.

By Brian Cabezas

When we think about risky occupations in the United States, the ones that immediately spring to mind – miners, taxi drivers, firefighters – often involve outdoor work, the use of vehicles or power tools, and other dangerous elements. Less obvious, but no less deleterious, are sedentary jobs that involve repetitive motion,

force, temperature extremes, or static and at times awkward posture. All of these are risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as sprains, strains, degeneration, inflammation and stress fractures.

Back injuries, one consequence of poor posture while sitting at a computer for long periods of time, is the leading cause of disability in the United States for people under 45, according to an Oregon OSHA report. Carpal tunnel syndrome, another consequence of significant computer use, accounted for 13% of all workplace inju-

ries in 2006.

Ergonomists study human capabilities to meet work demands. The goal of ergonomics is to reduce work-related MSDs by adapting the work to fit the person rather than forcing the person to fit the work. Tasks that involve repetition, force, static and awkward postures and temperature extremes could all lead to MSDs. Ninety percent of all office workers use personal computers. The static posture required by long-term computer use impacts blood flow, which in turn leads to muscle fatigue,

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Focus the Nation

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shock at the fact that as a nation, we still question the extreme threat of global warming. We need more action - not debate - was her message.

The 200 students who participated in Hunter College's *Focus the Nation* sessions, ranging from Watershed Protection to Potential for Renewables in NYC to CUNY's role in the transformation to a sustainable future, were exhorted that the time to act is now. Within CUNY, Lehman College, Queens College and Brooklyn College also took part in the day of action. Across New York, NYU, The New School, Pratt and Pace were involved.

This day of education served to raise awareness and focus the City on the huge environmental challenges we face. The message was clear: we all have a role to play in the creation of a more sustainable city, nation, and world. *Focus the Nation* of January 2008 is expected to be the first of many.

Ergonomics

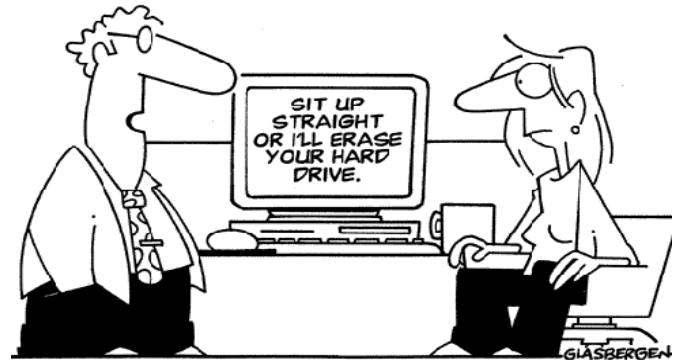
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resulting in discomfort and possibly injury. Furthermore, the repetitive motions of prolonged periods either during an 8-hour shift in the office or at home can result in muscle-tendon strain and fatigue. In addition to extensive computer use, lifting heavy objects, poor environmental conditions, and other long-lasting, repetitive tasks can add stresses to the body.

Ergonomics is an interdisciplinary study that combines physiology, anatomy, biomechanics, engineering and psychology. An effective ergonomics program should involve: designing systems compatible with physical and behavioral needs of individual employees, educating employees on MSDs and risk factors that cause or aggravate them, promoting continuous improvement, encouraging

new technology and innovation and ensuring leadership and employee involvement. With an effective ergonomics program in place, employees will benefit from a healthier work environment, reduction in musculoskeletal disorders, and employers will benefit from a reduction in worker's compensation claims, reduced absenteeism, and a healthier, more productive staff.

For a more detailed look at Ergonomics, visit <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html>



"It's called Ergonomics."

Buying Locally in New York City



By Ariana Tobias

Today, many New Yorkers have concerns about the safety and quality of their food. According to environmentalist and author Bill McKibben, seventy-five percent of New York City's apples come from the West Coast or overseas, even though New York State produces far more apples than the city can consume. An interesting situation considering produce imported long distances is older, has sat in trucks, airplanes, and warehouses longer, and has experienced greater nutrient depletion than produce grown locally and sold soon after being harvested.

The Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYSC), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the environment of the City for the past thirty years, has developed Greenmarket, a program that organizes and operates farmers markets in New York City. Customers can find fresh produce, flowers, fish, dairy, and other products at more than 40 farm-

ers markets throughout the five boroughs. The largest farmers market is held in Union Square in Manhattan, drawing 60,000 customers a day during peak season.

Both farmers and consumers benefit economically from local buying practices. Farmers cut out the middleman and sell directly to the customer; this should lower the price to the customer and helps the farmers get the full retail value of their products. Eighty percent of Greenmarket farmers report that they would be out of business if they couldn't sell their products at Greenmarket's farmers markets. Furthermore, farmers and regular customers can build relationships, and customers can get accurate information and insight about the food and growing process.

Local agriculture also improves the environment. The farmers who sell their products at the markets own more than 30,000 acres of regional open space, some of which protects New York City's watershed.

Some of the farms are certified organic, and all of the farmers use sustainable practices that keep the water, soil, and air quality on their farms in good condition. In addition, the carbon footprint of the food transportation industry is exacerbated by long distances between producer and consumer. For example, it takes 435 fossil-fuel calories to fly a five calorie strawberry from California to New York. Locally grown foodstuffs are transported over shorter distances, and therefore have less of an environmental impact.

In addition to providing an affordable alternative to the grocery store, farmers markets are venues that educate the public about local agriculture, revitalize public spaces, and help feed the hungry by donating unsold produce to City Harvest, New York City's only food rescue program.

More information about the benefits of buying locally is available at <http://www.cenyc.org/greenmarket>.

Meeting Updates

By Sheryce Woolery

November EHSO Meeting

The November meeting was held at the Graduate School of Journalism on November 8th, 2007. The lunch meeting began with greetings from Geraldo Vasquez, Director of Finance and Administration.

EPA audits have been successfully completed under the CUNY – EPA Audit and Disclosure agreement. The Agreement will not be complete until the Audit Disclosure Report is submitted in February 2008.

Internal audits have been conducted at City College, Hunter College and Kingsborough Community College. Upcoming 2008 internal audits are scheduled for Queensborough Community College on February 4, Lehman College on February 25, and Brooklyn College on March 17.

In addition to our compliance obligations, responding to recycling, re-use, and pollution prevention opportunities is a critical component of CUNY's sustainability efforts. The subcommittee is developing SOPs addressing procurement, air quality compliance, and university wide contracts for specialized waste disposal. Finally, the subcommittee will distribute a checklist to monitor compliance with hazardous waste regulations in teaching laboratories.

The training portion of the November Council meeting consisted of a presentation by **Gary Feinland of the Bureau of Solid Waste, Reduction**

and Recycling, Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste, on "Recycling and Waste Reduction on Campus." Mr. Feinland discussed operational strategies to promote recycling re-use and pollution prevention.

December EHSO Meeting

The December meeting of the Environmental Health and Safety Officers Council was held at the CUNY Central Office at 555 West 57th Street on December 13, 2007.

Bill Graffeo, Director of the Environmental Health and Safety Office at Queens College, said the Environmental Compliance Subcommittee was drafting a survey for chemical inventory to help us with the implementation of ChemTracker.

Kurt Klein, Health and Safety Manager, Central Office, reminded us that although the EPA and New York City Department of Health have guidelines on mold remediation, there are no specific regulations that campuses are encouraged to follow.

The training portion of the December Council meeting consisted of a presentation by **Harriet Shugarman, formerly with the United Nations.** Ms. Shugarman provided an updated and expanded presentation on the Academy Award-winning film, "**An Inconvenient Truth**" by Nobel Prize recipient, **Al Gore.** Ms. Shugarman discussed the sources and impacts of global warming.

Peter Accumanno and John Klonowski of Lehman College,

who will both be retiring in 2008 after more than three decades of commendable service, received special recognition. Special congratulations were offered to Shaldon Watson, who started as the Assistant Director of the Environmental Health and Safety Office at Lehman College and to Heather Parlier, who is the new legal representative of the EHSO Council.

January EHSO Meeting

The January meeting of the Environmental Health and Safety Officers Council was held at Hunter College on January 10, 2008. The meeting began with greetings from Ricardo Franco, EHSO at Hunter College, followed by a welcome from Conan Freud, Acting Vice President for Finance and Administration.

Bill Graffeo announced that the Semi-annual Reports by the EPA and the NO_x Annual Capping Report are due on January 30, 2008, DEC Pesticide Use Reports are due on February 1, 2008, Low Level Radioactive Waste, NYC DEP Community RTK (Tier 2) and DEC Annual Hazardous Waste Reports are due on March 1, 2008.

The training portion of the January Council meeting consisted of a presentation by **Adam Steinman, of Woodard and Curran, on "What to do when your EPA Audit is over: Lessons Learned from SUNY."** Adam gave a detailed presentation on ways in which CUNY can maintain its compliance achievements.

Get Comfortable! Tips to Reduce Computer Stress

By Ariana Tobias

Working at a computer doesn't have to mean an aching back, neck, or shoulders. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind:

Monitor Position: Should be at eye level, so you don't have to slouch or crane your neck to see. You should sit about two feet away from the screen.

Keyboard: Should be low, just above your lap, to reduce shoulder scrunch and wrist pain. Elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, fingers and wrists should be level when typing. Use a light touch rather than pounding the keys.

Chair: Choose a chair that supports your back and can be adjusted to fit your height.

Lighting: Having a properly lit workstation will reduce eyestrain. In addition, focus on something far away from the computer every 10 minutes or so to give your eyes a break.

Lower Body: Both feet should be flat on the floor or on a footrest, with legs and hips at a 90 degree angle to the spine.

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