

SAFETY DISPATCH

SPRING 2016



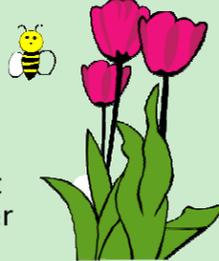
The beautiful Spring came; and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.

Harriet Ann Jacobs

Time to Tiptoe Through the Tulips (T⁶)

Spring's here so let's get out & safely frolic amongst the foliage.

- ♣ Tulips are poisonous to dogs & cats, especially the bulbs.
- ♣ Tulip pollen does affect seasonal allergies but it is most commonly the cause of skin irritation due to it producing the molecule, *tulipalin*; Wearing gloves can reduce the chance of irritation.
- ♣ Tulips will begin to attract bees so wear footwear when tiptoeing so as to not step on a bee or other sharp object.



☘ CHECK IT OUT ☘

For most of the 20th century, Saint Patrick's Day was considered a strictly religious holiday in Ireland, which meant that the nation's pubs were closed for business on March 17th. In 1970, the day was converted to a national holiday & the libations started flowing freely; oftentimes too freely.



SPRING HIGHLIGHTS:

CITYFIT EVENTS, city.fit@pittsburghpa.gov or call 255-2383 & check out our website: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/personnel/cityfit/>

- ♣ **CITYFIT WELLNESS REWARDS #2:** Employees enrolled in a City medical plan have until June 30th to qualify for CityFit Wellness Rewards #2
- ♣ **PGH MARATHON** is May 1st: To join a City Relay Team, register with CityFit by March 31st
- ♣ **MULCH MADNESS** April 15th: Spend your lunch at the Eliza Furnace Trail; register with CityFit

April is Alcohol Awareness Month UNDERSTAND HOW ALCOHOL EFFECTS YOU BEFORE USING

- ♣ Alcohol is a contributing factor in 30% of automobile accidents as it affects your motor skills, reaction time & judgment. If you're going out to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, don't drink & drive.
- ♣ Keep in mind that different medications may enhance the intoxication effect of alcohol; always talk to a physician about contraindications to alcohol before starting to take new medications.
- ♣ Ladies, if you are pregnant or breast feeding a child, experts say no amount of alcohol is a safe amount. Exposure to alcohol during development can have harmful side effects ranging from mild to severe physical disabilities and mental handicaps.
- ♣ Alcohol is addictive & if you feel you may need help, please reach out to the City of Pittsburgh Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential assistance.



What's The Bottom Line?

A toxic dose & a typical dose of alcohol is extremely narrow. If you're happily buzzed at say, three drinks, three more might make you sick & three after that may put you in alcohol poisoning territory. According to federal data, in 2014 more than 30,700 Americans died from alcohol-induced causes, including alcohol poisoning & cirrhosis (which is greater than overdoses of prescription painkillers & heroin combined.) This equates to 9.6 deaths per 100,000 people, an increase of 37 percent since 2002. This tally of alcohol-induced fatalities excludes deaths from drunk driving, other accidents & homicides committed under the influence of alcohol. If those numbers were included, the annual toll of deaths directly or indirectly caused by alcohol would be closer to 90,000 in 2014 according to the CDC.

Regarding Lead Levels in Your Drinking Water

Lead that is found in drinking water predominantly comes from the plumbing infrastructure, not the source. Materials used to treat water in order to assure it is safe prior to reaching your home can cause lead to leach out of the pipe fittings (lead piping stopped being installed about 1930). The PWSA test the lead levels in the water every two years and the county reviews tests semiannually from all water suppliers. The latest test PWSA did in 2014 show lead levels were measured at 14.7 part per billion (ppb), only 0.3 ppb away from the EPA's actionable level of 15 ppb. To put that into perspective though, in Flint, Michigan at the peak of the recent water crisis, lead levels were found to be as high as 5,000-13,000 ppb. Here are some ways to limit your exposure to lead in water coming from your tap at home:

- ♣ Use commercial filters for additional protection against lead for water you drink or cook with. Change them regularly.
- ♣ In all situations, drink & cook only with water that comes out of the tap **cold**. Warm or hot tap water can contain much higher levels of lead and melts your drinks' ice cubes too fast.
- ♣ It has been shown that water ran through the pipes after a long period of non-use (such as overnight) will pose the greatest threat of lead contamination. So run your cold water for a bit before ingesting (give this water to your houseplants.)
- ♣ Anyone with concerns regarding the lead levels in their water can call the PWSA at 412-782-7554 to request a free water lead testing kit.



Northside Common Ministries Love Your Block 2013

☘ SPRING SAFETY TIPS ☘

Dangers of Lead Lead (Pb) is harmful when ingested or inhaled in dust. Exposure is most detrimental to developing children, as lead is a neurotoxin & can severely inhibit developmental growth of various mental capabilities. The greatest two sources of lead exposures in the U.S. come from lead paint and the water supply infrastructure. The PA Department of Health reported in 2014 that ~8% of children in Pittsburgh had elevated blood lead levels (>5 micrograms/deciliter) compared to Flint Michigan which ~3% of children had elevated blood lead levels. Much of the exposure is in the home & can be prevented.

Lead Hazards in the Home

Lead Paint: Lead wasn't banned in paint until 1978, thus most houses built before then are likely to contain lead paint & in PA this is the greatest source of concern in regards to child exposure. Lead paint chips or the dust can be ingested by children & over time elevate the lead levels in the blood leading to harmful side effects. Testing a site for lead paint can be done with home testing kits but to be safe, take appropriate precautions when removing old paint or get a professional to do it.

Toys: That favorite dump truck or rocking chair handed down in the family, antique doll furniture, or toy jewelry could contain lead-based paint or contain lead in the material it is made from. Swallowing or biting toys or toy jewelry that contain lead can cause a child to be exposed to lead. As a precaution be wary of used toys, dollar store items & check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission for more information on the topic.

Dirty hands: Lead is naturally found in soils & can be contaminated by old paint, bullet shrapnel or by gasoline byproducts from days before unleaded gas. Children playing in dirt should thoroughly clean their hands after play & before eating (take the *lead* in assuring children learn proper hand-washing techniques.)



Daylight Savings Time Begins March 13th Turn your clocks back, change the batteries in your smoke/ CO detectors and get prepared for the lion-like weather of March exiting the month like the lamb, bringing warmer weather, more sunshine & yummy chops (or for you vegetarians, you may substitute your lamb chops for some meat-flavored tofu or black-bean substitute.)



Emergency Contact Information Is your emergency contact information up to date? Some people change phone numbers like they toggle light switches. Please note that the Department of Personnel & Civil Service Commission does not hold emergency contact information for all city employees; each department handles their own emergency contact information. If something were to happen to you, you would want your loved ones to be there. It is important that administration has the proper tools to ensure that can happen. Check with your supervisor to ensure your information is up to date and verify that they can get in contact with your loved ones in case of necessity.

Brought to you by the Department of Personnel & Civil Service Commission.

Archived Safety Dispatches can be found at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/personnel/safety-dispatch>

For comments, suggestions or other safety resources contact David Reed, Safety Manager, david.reed@pittsburghpa.gov or 412-255-2403