ETH zürich

SSHE Newsletter 3/2019

December 2019

ETH Zurich
Safety, Security, Health and Environment Department (SSHE)
Tel. +41 (0)44 632 30 30
www.sicherheit.ethz.ch

1) Indoor Climate during the Heating Period

In winter, indoor air is drier than in summer. 30 to 40% relative humidity is normal, as are temporary decreases below this level. However, if the humidity stays below this level for several weeks, symptoms such as a dry throat or burning eyes may result. Vulnerable individuals may develop conjunctivitis or become more susceptible to colds. Nevertheless, humidification of the ventilation system is not recommended on the grounds of energy conservation and hygiene. Not only does this approach result in barely perceptible increases in air humidity, but may cause, for instance, bacteria to be released into the air. Experience shows that complaints about overly dry air are often due to excessive temperatures or a very high rate of air change. Health problems as a result of dry indoor air tend to be overestimated – humidity of less than 30% can also occur outdoors in winter. The following tips can help to promote well-being in heated rooms:

- Intermittent ventilation through opening the window instead of tilting – a tilted window has a negative effect on the indoor climate, especially in winter. It is preferable to air the office for five minutes every three hours.
- Drink water or unsweetened tea while at work.
- Take a short walk outdoors during the lunch break.
- Ensure that the room temperature is between 21 and 23°C.
- Keeping houseplants and placing bowls containing water in the room increases the humidity. Give preference to hydroponics and plants that do not release allergens, such as ivy or papyrus.

Further information is available on the website → of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). If you have questions, please contact your supervisor. He will decide on whether or not to contact ETH's occupational practitioner Dr. med. Leonhard Sigel → to carry out an evaluation.

2) Online Tool Promoting Sustainable Events

ETH Zurich is already making considerable efforts to promote resource-conserving behaviour. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement. Conferences and seminars are part of everyday life at ETH Zurich and should thus be conducted in a manner, which is as environmentally friendly as possible. It goes without saying that the greatest potential lies in the reduction of air travel in connection with these types of events. Yet, there are other areas in which optimisation is possible with little effort.

As sustainability aspects are rarely prioritised during the organisation of events, we sought to develop a tool which is at once self-explanatory and efficient, and with the minimum effort for users. In terms of content, the tool builds on the existing guidelines on "Sustainable Events" and "Sustainable Catering", taking the form of an interactive mind map featuring several levels. Fourteen planning areas in which sustainability criteria play a role, from transport and accommodation to gastronomy, decoration and promotional gifts constitute the starting point. Selecting an area takes you down one level, allowing you successive access to the subtopics. These feature implementation aids for users, including direct links to existing offers, practical tips and background information. In this way, any event, be it an apéro or a conference lasting several days, can become more sustainable with ease. Click on the link to view the guidelines and explore the online tool →. Gina Mörgeli → will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

3) Alarm Help Files at ETH

The Emergency Desk (AZ) has a new Alarm Management System (AMS). At present, there are over 16,000 data points in the AMS that can trigger an alarm, including technical alarms such as heating or air conditioning systems, as well as emergency alarms such as lift or gas alarms. With the implementation of the AMS, SSHE also took over the management of the alarm help files (AHF) from Facility Management. To assist in this process, we developed a tool to enable online administration of the AHFs.

What is an AHF? It is a file connected to an alarm in the AMS where there is a danger to people, animals or potential damage to a research project. When an alarm is triggered, the information in the AHF is displayed automatically on the screen of the AZ operator. This enables the operator to contact the persons who should react to the alarm and give them correct instructions, thus ensuring an efficient intervention. The information in the AHF can only come from the researchers or technicians directly responsible for the systems monitored by the AZ. Moreover, the AHF must contain information on who to contact, including at least two deputies (to cover for absences due to holiday, illness etc.).

In the coming weeks, all existing AHFs will be transferred into the AHF-tool. The researchers and technicians responsible will receive an email with instructions on how to review the information in their AHFs in the AHF-Tool. This is not only vital for the safety of the students and employees of ETH Zurich, but also to ensure that no research is lost due to an incorrect intervention. Thus, we need your support to keep your systems safe. If you have any questions about the AHFs, please, do not hesitate to contact us: sgu_ahf@ethz.ch →.

4) Drones: Registration Mandatory from June 2020

Drone flight on the Hönggerberg (photo: Heidi Hostettler)

Drones are a key issue at ETH Zurich, both as an actual research topic and in their capacity as assistive devices. Filming, aerial surveying flights, goods transport – the applications are as varied as the types of drones used. As drone flights are not devoid of risk, the DETEC (the Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications) has issued an ordinance stipulating safety precautions: the DETEC Ordinance → on Special Category Aircraft (OSCA). ETH members who work with drones are doubtlessly familiar with this document.

Switzerland's introduction of the mandatory registration of drones weighing 250 g or more in line with its adoption of EU aviation law in June 2020 is a new requirement, as the FOCA (Federal Office of Civil Aviation) writes in a media release →. All ETH members who fly such drones are affected by this new regulation. In addition to the registration requirement, other changes, such as an obligatory online examination for drone pilots, have been introduced. According to the FOCA, precise details of the administrative registration process are not yet known, but should be clarified early next year.

We will keep you updated. In the meantime, we wish you a pleasant flight! Please contact Dr. Reto Suter → in the event of questions related to this topic.

5) Chemical Intervention Team (CIT) – Reinforcements Required

During office hours, the CIT is responsible for dealing with minor acute chemical accidents at ETH Zurich and advises on non-acute chemical incidents. It deploys in the event that an incident can no longer be dealt with by the laboratory users alone, but does not yet require attendance by the Hazmat Team of the Canton of Zurich ("Chemiewehr"). Like the First Aid Team and the Fire Alarm Team, the CIT is organised militia style (consisting of staff from the departments, platforms and central bodies) and is mobilised via the Emergency Desk as required. Examples of CIT deployments include:

- smaller accidents (e.g. burst hazardous waste canisters)
- leaking compressed gas cylinders / gas networks

- identification of “chemical” odour emissions in buildings
- delicate disposal operations (e.g. obsolete reactive chemicals)
- supporting the / collaborating with the Hazmat Team (“Chemiewehr”) during major incidents

Various training courses are held every year to ensure that the CIT is equipped for these tasks. Are you interested in joining the CIT? Or would you like more information about the CIT? Then please feel free to contact us at cit@ethz.ch → to arrange a personal meeting.

6) Protective Measures Outdoor Area bQm, Einstein and Zweistein

Prohibition sign on barred gate (photo: SSHE)

For some time now, disturbances in the outdoor area near the bQm café-bar and Einstein and Zweistein cafeterias have occurred as a result of people loitering after the closure of the premises, engaging in vandalism, noise pollution and littering. SSHE has now taken measures in cooperation with the Building Area HG (Facility Management department) in order to improve the situation: Motion sensors (lighting) have been installed to make the area unattractive for spontaneous parties. The terrace area will now be closed off with barred gates from Monday to Thursday between 22:00 and 6:30 and from 22:00 on Friday night to 6:30 on Monday morning.

7) Fire Safety Training 2019: Photo Retrospective

Almost 1,400 ETH members participated in this year’s fire safety training (photos: SSHE)