

Health & Safety News

Monona Rossol, president of Arts Crafts and Theatre Safety (ACTS) generated a lively, entertaining dialog with AIC members who attended her presentation, "Safe and Regulated Conservation," at the annual meeting in Denver. She covered the topics in her prepared material by fielding questions from the floor. Rossol answered a wide range of questions on the meaning of art material labeling; TLVs; respirator use and storage; chemical storage precautions; and many other topics.

Publications from OSHA, the Center for Safety in the Arts (CSA), and ACTS were on display throughout the week of meetings at the new Health and Safety publications table. Complete order lists for the publications on display and the first draft of the Health and Safety Committee's annotated suppliers list were available. Suggestions for additions to the table for future meetings are welcome. Send SASE with your request for the suppliers list to: Sandra Blackard, [redacted], Bedford, TX 76021. Contact OSHA, CSA or ACTS for publications lists.

Call for Papers

(continued from page 2)

Abstracts should be double-spaced and a maximum of two pages. Send them by **October 1** to: Jay Krueger, AIC vice-president and program chair, National Gallery of Art, DCL, 6th St. & Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20565. Abstracts may also be sent to the AIC office; fax: (202) 452-9328. If you have questions about abstracts, please call Jay at [redacted].

The substance of papers submitted for the general session should not have been previously published. Papers delivered in the general session will appear in the summer 1995 issue of *J.A.I.C.* Manuscripts will be due in the AIC office by **July 30, 1994**. Information about length and preparation of manuscripts will be sent to authors whose papers have been accepted for presentation. Questions about the publication should be directed to Marcia Anderson, in the AIC office, or Elisabeth West FitzHugh, editor, at [redacted].

Some Health & Safety Considerations For Flood Salvage Efforts

Prepared by the AIC Health and Safety Committee

The following general recommendations are intended to provide practical guidance only. AIC cannot assume responsibility or liability for the health and safety of those involved in flood salvage efforts.

- **FAST-FLOWING WATER:** Statistically, in flooded areas persons in vehicles are at the greatest risk of drowning. Heed all road warnings and avoid crossing even shallow water. The current below the surface may be greater than it appears. Contact the local police or the public works department for road conditions.
- **ELECTRICAL HAZARDS:** Be aware of the possibility of gas leaks and downed power lines in and around flood-damaged structures. Avoid wading in water. Use extreme caution when generating sparks. Report all suspected gas leaks to the local utility company.
- **FLOOD WATER CONTAMINANTS:** Be very aware that flood water and mud (wet or dry) is likely to be contaminated with human waste, agricultural waste, fertilizers, pesticides, and other inorganic and organic hazardous materials. In assessing the possible hazards of your situation, consider immediate upstream contaminants from factories, and other sources, and the path of rising water within the building (e.g., through a boiler room or laboratory).
As the floods recede many kinds of rotting and decomposing materials will add to the contaminants. Be aware of the toxicity of the materials used in the creation or previous res-

toration of the salvaged art, artifacts, and structures, and take proper precautions during salvage efforts (use gloves, respirators, and other appropriate equipment and clothing). Toxic materials will be likely to include lead paint peeling off older buildings, lead and other toxic pigments flaking off paintings and painted artifacts, and pesticides from treated natural history specimens. Contact ACTS or CSA (see Resources next page) about the toxic content of specific items.

- **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT/CLOTHING:** If you have open cuts or wounds keep them clean and wear protective clothing. Protect your eyes and mouth from flood water splashes with splash goggles or glasses and paper face masks. Wear adequate plastic gloves, and replace them if they puncture. Cotton gloves are recommended as liners. Use rubber boots or fishing waders. For questions on personal protection from specific toxic art or building materials, contact ACTS or CSA (see Resources next page).
- **MICROORGANISMS:** Repeated exposure to high levels of airborne microorganisms can sensitize some individuals, creating lifelong allergy problems. Some molds and fungi also are toxic in large quantities. For these reasons, good ventilation (providing fresh, outside air) is needed in flood work sites. If good ventilation cannot be provided and the site has a moldy odor, shows evidence of infestation, or workers are developing symptoms, air sampling should be done.*
A NIOSH-approved toxic dust mask is probably sufficient for moderately elevated concentrations. For higher concentrations, use a cartridge respirator with toxic dust filters. It is even conceivable that air-supplied respirators would be needed in some situations. Heavy infestations on building surfaces or artifacts may manifest as colored (e.g., black, tan, pink) blooms. These areas should be swab-sampled and identified to plan effective conservation treatment (e.g., stain removal) or to protect people who are having severe health reactions.
Respirators will not function properly for those with facial hair, deep scars, or other facial irregularities that prevent a tight seal. People already

allergic to molds and fungi may not find any level of protection sufficient. People with heart, respiratory, and lung problems or pregnant women may not be able to use respiratory protection safely. Check with your doctor first.

- **IMMUNIZATIONS:** Ensure that tetanus shots are up to date. Check the immunization recommendations of the local health department. Discuss other immunizations and your personal risks with your doctor. There is a danger of hepatitis associated with polluted water.
- **DRINKING WATER:** In recently flooded areas, use bottled water of known origin only. No local sources of drinking water are considered to be safe. Contact the local health department for specifics on types of water treatment.
- **HYGIENE:** Use disinfectants to wash hands as necessary. Always wash after handling items that have come in contact with flood waters and before eating or handling food.
- **MOSQUITOES:** In warm, recently flooded areas, mosquitoes will breed rapidly. They generally represent a nuisance problem, although some may carry problem diseases. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants. Use mosquito repellent containing DEET. Contact the local health department for more information.
- **ANIMAL BITES:** Be aware that reports of bites from displaced wild animals (possibly infected with rabies) and snakes increase following floods. Contact the local health department for more information.
- **STRESS:** Stress levels will be high. Residents of flood areas are likely to have been working hard for weeks with inadequate sleep. Decision-making abilities will be reduced. Be sensitive to the situation and do not try to achieve too much in a short period. Insist on rest periods. Cleanup will take time. Do not hesitate to obtain counseling, if necessary.
- **RESOURCES:** Consult the local health department for area-specific warnings and recommendations. Be aware that prepared handouts for public use may cover only highest priority issues. More specific questions should be addressed to the appropriate health official. Contact Arts Crafts and Theatre Safety (ACTS), (212) 777-0062, or

the Center for Safety in the Arts (CSA), (212) 227- 6220, with questions concerning specific situations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Arts Crafts and Theatre Safety, "Conservators and Restorers Face Flood Hazards," *ACTS FACTS*, 7, no. 8 (August 1993); Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Health Studies; Center for Safety in the Arts (CSA); Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC); Red Cross Disaster Operations Center, Health Services Department; Barbara Roberts.

*In 1986 the ACGIH Committee on Bioaerosols proposed that "total counts exceeding 10,000 cfu/m³ [colony forming units per cubic meter] indicate a need to proceed to remedial actions" and that the presence of "any one fungus in levels exceeding 500 cfu/m³ can lead to a presumption of a building-related source." Currently, the ACGIH recommends the use of rank-order comparisons of indoor and outdoor air sample populations rather than specifying threshold concentrations. However, this approach is not very helpful in flood areas, where the outdoor concentrations may be quite high. Instead, the 1986 guideline can be used as a benchmark for making decisions about respiratory protection.

Internal Advisory Group Meets in Denver

The fourth semiannual meeting of the Internal Advisory Group (IAG), held in conjunction with AIC's annual meeting in Denver, focused on three major issues: the need to increase cultural diversity in the conservation field; the role of paraprofessionals in AIC; and annual meeting presentations, formats, and logistical arrangements.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Bert van Zelst, chair of the newly established Cultural Diversity Task Force, reviewed the Board's charge to the task force: to look at ways to improve diversity in AIC; work with other arts organizations

to improve diversity in the arts using conservation, a combination of science and the arts, as a focus; and develop better ties with Latin American conservators. He noted that since AIC is in large measure part of the museum world, the task force would work on this initiative with the American Association of Museums, College Art Association, and other related organizations. The group agreed that AIC needs programs to attract members of diverse cultures. Several programs were cited as good models, including the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, DC, which uses art conservation to teach science to largely African-American and Hispanic students; the efforts of the Art Conservation Program at the University of Delaware to recruit minorities; and the New England Association of Chemistry Teachers' summer training program for high school teachers, "Chemistry in Art Conservation." The task force is developing a plan of potential activities. It intends to work closely with the Paraprofessional Task Force.

PARAPROFESSIONALS AND AIC: A report from Don Williams, head of the Paraprofessional Task Force, described the group's efforts to better incorporate professionals from related fields into AIC activities and led to a lively discussion of the potentially reciprocal relationship between these professionals and AIC members. Individuals who are not trained conservators but who work directly with conservators—including conservation technicians, preparators, framers, collections managers, and exhibit designers—can benefit from many of AIC's programs, and AIC members in turn have much to learn from them.

Some IAG members felt that AIC should take the initiative to involve paraprofessionals, while others believed that we should focus on conservation professionals. Still others thought that we should reach out to paraprofessionals and create programs for them. The IAG encouraged the development of sessions and workshops at annual meetings that would be of interest to professionals in related fields. On the question of voting membership for paraprofessionals, Board members emphasized that this issue should remain separate and not be allowed to cloud the issue of participation in AIC.

The IAG concluded its discussion of paraprofessionals and AIC by asking the task force to address two questions: 1)