



*Improving patient, workplace,
and environmental health and
safety in healthcare*

Global Health and Safety Initiative

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From the Executive Director's Desk

One can argue that many of society's - i.e. our - policies, incentives and directions have been short sighted if not just wrong. The economic crisis we are currently in is living proof of this. It is also true in the areas of public health, healthcare, and the environment. For example, leading healthcare organizations have been calling for change. The American Hospital Association is urging Congress and the Obama Transition Team for immediate and swift economic support of Health Care in America: [The Road to Economic Recovery: A Proposal to Support Health Care in America](#). The Joint Commission cites the need for significant improvements in hospital design and operations in a [new report on the Hospital of the Future](#), and the Institutes of Medicine is developing a [research agenda for managing the health risks of climate change](#) and has released a [report calling for the revitalization of the Department of Health and Human Services in order to protect the health of all Americans](#). The Global Health and Safety Initiative (GHSI) has had discussions with each of these organizations and we are pleased that they are including points consistent with GHSI tenets.

There are compelling reasons to change our policies, incentives and directions. Simply put, the way we as a society have organized, operated and managed our economy, the environment and even healthcare have led to significant problems and may well not be sustainable. These issues appear to be on the national agenda. President-elect Obama, his cabinet and advisor appointments and his Transition Team are talking about serious efforts to stimulate the economy, to addressing climate change and for healthcare reform.

The [Global Health and Safety Initiative](#) and [Health Care Without Harm](#) are having conversations with the Transition Team to advocate for support to hospitals and healthcare to improve their energy efficiency and use of renewable energy as one way to address several priorities - helping to

stimulate the economy by creating green jobs, reducing energy use by hospitals (the second most energy intensive industry in the U.S.), contributing to a reduction in green house gas emissions, and hence climate change, improving the health of the population by reducing the negative health consequences associated with energy production and climate change and helping to reduce hospital costs.

With support, health care can be a leader in demonstrating how the nation's largest private sector source of jobs - 5 million nationwide (figures from the American Hospital Association) can make significant improvements in its own industry, in society and in the health of our nation. Thus in 2009 and coming years, we have the opportunity, and increasingly the necessity, to get it right - i.e. to set better priorities, policies, incentives and directions that will help create a healthier, safer and more sustainable society. On behalf of the Global Health and Safety Initiative, our partners, colleagues and family, here's wishing you Happy Holidays and a rewarding and very productive New Year.

Bob Eisenman, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Global Health and Safety Initiative information.

Upcoming Events

To tell us about an event, please contact GHSI staff at [info AT globalhealthsafety.org](mailto:info@globalhealthsafety.org).

- ▶ **GHSI Members Speaking at the Association for Community Health Improvement:** Gary Cohen from Health Care Without Harm, and Kathy Gerwig and Loel Solomon from Kaiser Permanente are making a presentation about the future of "community benefits" at the Association for Community Health Improvement's (ACHI) Spring Training for Health Champions national conference in Los Angeles, California on March 11-13, 2009. For more information, visit the [ACHI website](#).
- ▶ **GHSI Executive Director and CHD Board Members Speaking at the National Building Museum:** Global Health and Safety Initiative Executive Director Bob Eisenman, and Center for Health Design Board Members Robin Guenther and Roger S. Ulrich, will be speaking at the [National Building Museum](#) on March 23, 2009, as part of it's [For the Greener Good public series](#). The series affirms the National Building Museum's commitment to environmental sustainability and calls on experts from diverse backgrounds to investigate links between environmental sustainability and design, public health, energy policy, bioscience, infrastructure, education, and even popular culture. The March 23, 2009, session explores why a green hospital is a healthier one. See the National Building Museum's website for [ticket information](#).

What's New?

Here are a few of the latest developments from GHSI's workgroups, members, and NGO partners:

- ▶ **Health Care Without Harm and World Health Organization Launch Global Mercury Partnership to Eliminate Mercury from Healthcare:** Building on the work of the U.S. healthcare sector and the European Union to eliminate mercury based medical products

over the last decade, HCWH and the WHO launched a partnership to eliminate mercury from healthcare at a global scale. Due to HCWH's work over the last decade, the Philippines has banned mercury-based measuring devices, while many countries in Latin America are poised to follow suit. The Partnership was announced in New Delhi, India in December and coincided with a regional mercury in healthcare conference as well as a business roundtable to attract Indian manufacturers to capture the growing global market for mercury-free medical devices. GHSI's hospital partners were instrumental in the United States in setting the example for how to eliminate mercury from their institutions.

- ▶ **Greener and Safer Hospitals Book Proposal in Development:** The Global Health and Safety Initiative is in discussion with the Health Administration Press, the publishing arm of the American College of Healthcare Executives to write a book on Greener and Safer Hospitals (working title - special thanks to Center for Health Design's Sara Marberry for connecting us). The Press was initially thinking of a book about the greening of hospitals, but very much likes our (GHSI's) approach of tying smarter environmental approaches to improving safety. Likewise the Press thinks our emphasis on the triple safeties - patient, worker/workplace and community/environmental health and safety is a good conceptual approach that will be of interest to their target audience - health care executives and administrators.

As currently conceived the book will follow the tenets of the GHSI - part building the case for why greener and safer hospitals are so important now and part a "how to" book on what hospitals can do to improve their facilities and operations and to help transform the industry. Tentatively chapters will cover: The Case for Greener and Safer Hospitals; the Triple Safeties - patient, worker/workplace and community/environmental health and safety; the Economic Case for Greener and Safer Hospitals; individual chapters on the state of the knowledge, successful strategies, examples and recommendations for the Built Environment, Purchasing, Operations, Research, Public Policy and Community Benefit/Corporate Social Responsibility; Next Steps - resources, a roadmap to success and a call to join the GHSI and partner organizations to together make a difference.

For more information, contact: [Bob Eisenman, GHSI Executive Director](#).

- ▶ **New Template: Guiding Principles for Sourcing Building Products, Finishes and Furnishings:** The Materials subcommittee of the Built Environment workgroup completed a template, Guiding Principles for Sourcing Building Products, Finishes and Furnishings. It will be presented to the board/advisory committee in the next couple of weeks and posted to the GHSI website soon thereafter. It serves as a tool that health care systems and A&D firms can use to help signal to their contractors, manufacturers and vendors their interest in sourcing building products, finishes, and furnishings free of toxicants and containing recycled content.
- ▶ **Halogenated Flame Retardants Webinar Presentation Posted onto the Health Care Without Harm Website:** Hosted on December 10, 2008, this webinar discussed halogenated flame retardants (HFRs) and their widespread use in electronics, draperies, carpets and furniture. Flame retardants can migrate out of products and are being found in rapidly increasing levels in dust, body fluids, human fat, breast milk, the food chain, pets and wild animals. Dr. Arlene Blum of the Green Science Policy Institute discussed

toxicity issues, routes of exposure and the environmental impact of these materials. Dr. Mark Rossi of Clean Production Action identified where flame retardants are likely to be used in healthcare settings and also addressed the availability of safer alternatives. Rachael Baker of Kaiser Permanente talked about Kaiser's efforts to express preference for HFR free products and their recent use of a disclosure questionnaire to identify environmentally preferable products including electronics. Judy Levin of the Center for Environmental Health discussed current and proposed initiatives and regulations that either promote or restrict the use of halogenated flame retardants. The webinar concluded with a request for organizations to proactively weigh in on upcoming initiatives that will increase the market for HFR-free products. See the [Health Care Without Harm website](#) for the presentation and audio file.

- ▶ **The Corporate Citizenship Assessment Tool Webinar Presentation Available on the GHSI Wiki:** Hosted by the GHSI's CSR/PP WG on December 11, this session introduced participants to the [Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship's](#) Assessment Tool. Developed as an online platform for member organizations to assess their strengths and gaps in corporate citizenship management, the tool has been used by over 70 companies since it was first launched in March 2007. It provides a quick and practical way to assess an organizations current state of corporate citizenship management in four distinct dimensions of corporate citizenship - *governance, community support, operations, and products & services*. The presentation is located on the GHSI Wiki in the the CSR/PP WG Resources section; please note that you must be a GHSI member to access this presentation.

Workgroups: Information and Call Dates

Interested in joining the GHSI and participating in one or more of these workgroups? Please contact GHSI staff at [info AT globalhealthsafety.org](mailto:info@globalhealthsafety.org), and we'll put you in touch with the appropriate workgroup leader to get you started.

- ▶ The focus of the **Research Collaborative** is to help provide funding and facilitate research that links better building designs, greener and safer materials and products and improved approaches to operations that will reduce the hazards associated with negative health affects. The Research workgroup will reconvene the week of January 12, 2009. Please contact [Rachel Machi](#) if you are interested in being added to the roster. She will send out the date, time and agenda for the meeting before the end of December.
- ▶ The **Sustainable Operations** workgroup strategy focuses on the acceleration of best practices for operations among the GHSI partners and the entire healthcare sector, including Environmental Services, Hazardous Materials, Safety, Dietary/Food Services, and Risk Management. The next Sustainable Operations workgroup call is Thursday, January 15, 1pm Pacific / 3pm Central / 4pm Eastern.
- ▶ The **Healthy Purchasing** workgroup will use the collective purchasing power of participating hospital systems and their Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs) to transform the market for healthcare products and technologies that meet the goals of patient and workplace safety and environmental sustainability, including identifying priority products and developing a database of environmentally preferable product

specifications. The Purchasing workgroup will reconvene the first half of January 2009, exact date and time to be determined.

- ▶ The **Built Environment** workgroup will provide access to an array of "best practices" to implement strategies that augment patient safety and workplace safety. These strategies also will maximize the sector's environmental performance while reducing healthcare's eco-footprint and contributing to the health and safety of patients and workers. The next Built Environment meeting is Wednesday, January 21, 8am Pacific / 10am Central / 11am Eastern. The next Materials subcommittee call is Thursday, January 22, 11am Pacific / 1pm Central / 2pm Eastern.
- ▶ Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the concept of leveraging assets in ways that promote economic, social and environmental health. The **CSR and Public Policy** workgroup provides an avenue to advance CSR concepts by integrating safety and sustainability into members' business strategies and operations. The public policy component of this workgroup's efforts will focus on collective strategies for pursuing responsible public policy that supports safety and sustainability in health care, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Workgroup calls are on the fourth Thursday of each month at 1pm Pacific / 3pm Central / 4pm Eastern. The next CSR/PP workgroup call will be on January 22.
- ▶ Workgroup Leader calls are scheduled for January 12 and 26, and are listed on the wiki.

Have Questions?

Visit our [GHSI website](#) for frequent program updates and information about upcoming meetings and events. If you have questions about becoming a member of GHSI, please contact the GHSI Executive Director, Bob Eisenman, Ph.D., at 510-418-6197 or [beisenman AT globalhealthsafety.org](mailto:beisenman@globalhealthsafety.org).

Thank you for your help. Working together through GHSI, we can transform the health care industry and improve patient, worker, workplace and environmental safety.

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