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UNH Announces Update To Hazardous Materials Tracking System

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June 20, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- On the heels of a recently foiled terrorist attack in Toronto that uncovered three tons of ammonium nitrate, three times what was used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people, the University of New Hampshire announces a new version of its UNH Chemical Environmental Management System (UNHCEMS), a web-based system that allows institutions to track chemicals, hazardous waste, and biological and radiological material as well as perform a litany of other functions.

This system expansion allows for the tracking of biological agents, such as anthrax and the plague. "The tracking of these materials is a key component of Homeland Security efforts," said Brad Manning, director of the UNH Environmental Health and Safety. "The system already tracks thousands of chemical and radioactive materials, and biological agents was the last piece."

"The last major update to UNHCEMS was two years ago when a radiological materials module was added," said Ken Brown, CEMS coordinator in the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. "A new feature of this system is a biological module, which tracks the biological type, concentration, risk group and biological safety level for each organism, as well as recommends the appropriate personal protective equipment for each agent."

In addition, the chemical inventory module has been modified to allow for the integration of portable digital assistants, such as HP iPAQs or Palm Pilots, equipped with barcode scanners that allow laboratory or environmental health and safety personnel to verify or make changes to the chemical inventory. For those laboratories that are equipped with wireless networks, the changes can be made in real time. This new application has been aptly named HandyCEMS.

In collaboration with Keene State College, the UNH Research Computing Center developed the Public Safety Management Project, which integrates UNHCEMS with another application for first responders, called Project 54 (www.project54.unh.edu/). This new utility will provide first responders with the ability to view the hazards in the building of a participating UNHCEMS institution.

UNHCEMS was created by the UNH Research Computing Center, in cooperation with the UNH Office of Environmental Health and Safety, as part of an EPA settlement agreement from a 1997 inspection. UNHCEMS is currently being used at UNH, Brown University, Keene High School and Keene State College, Plymouth State University, two Nashua high schools, UMASS Amherst, and the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. UNHCEMS is specifically designed to run on either Linux or Windows, use an open source database, and be hosted locally by the

educational institutions themselves.

Institutions interested in learning more about UNHCEMS can visit www.cems-info.sr.unh.edu or contact Patrick Messer, associate director of the UNH Research Computing Center, at 603-862-2889.

Editors: David Gillum, assistant director of UNH Environmental Health and Safety, and Ken Brown, CEMS coordinator, are available for press inquiries. They can be reached at 603-862-4041.