CAMPUS Connections

Vol. 2 | Summer 2025

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NREL

Director's Note ●●●

Enjoying NREL's Surroundings and Supporting Our Mission Depends on Staying Safe

One of the benefits of working at NREL is being able to enjoy our amazing campuses. I always look forward to visiting our Alaska and Washington, D.C., locations with their contrasting scenery—vibrant urban settings and natural beauty. But I'm most familiar with our South Table Mountain (STM) and Flatiron campuses in Colorado, which boast world-class scenery. It didn't surprise me that Energy Secretary Chris Wright suggested during his April visit that STM could be the most beautiful location in the national laboratory system.

Like many of you, I appreciate what all that the nearby mountains have to offer. The Rockies remind me of the Alps, and growing up in Germany, I spent a lot of time in the outdoors with my family, hiking, skiing, and simply relaxing.

Later, as a young man, I became part of a German Army alpine unit where I expanded my skills and, at times, thrills. Once we were scrambling up a cliff when a soldier above me accidentally dislodged a large rock that came hurtling down. I was wearing a helmet, but this boulder was larger than a bowling ball and headed right at me. At the last second, the rock hit something and skipped over me. My career as a 20-year-old recruit wasn't over.

That moment taught some lessons I hold dear: first, there's nothing quite as exhilarating (even adrenaline producing) for me as being in nature, especially with others; and second, you have to always be careful, ensuring your safety and that of others around you. Even experienced mountaineers can screw up.

I'm reminded of both of these points with this issue of Campus Connections. Our publication shows that health and safety are top of mind for us all—no matter how beautiful a landscape may be, or how advanced our laboratories are, as I've said, the most vital goal is the wellbeing of each person. We want everyone to return home safely to their families.

Of course, terms such as "safety" and "health" are broad. And that's why I'm excited to share this issue with you, because you will see examples that illustrate many different practices that can contribute to overall safety, health, and wellbeing.

For instance, we've all learned that it is vital to find ways to take breaks to recharge our batteries. I try to walk around the Research Support Facility or meet others for lunch to ensure I'm not sitting hunched over my desk all day. I've heard some in our D.C. office go for lunchtime runs. I know others enjoy activities such as attending a yoga class, either in person or remotely, or joining a meditation group. NREL cyclists are fortunate that there are so many trails nearby—but did you also know that there are bike repair stations on the STM and Flatiron campuses? And our Alaska colleagues are savvy in using the latest gear when bike commuting in freezing temperatures.

But not everything can be done away from our desks. To avoid stress and injuries, you can tap into the strong ergonomic resources at NREL to ensure that, even while in front of your computer, you maintain healthy habits and avoid chronic pain. We also want you to enjoy your time away from the laboratory after retirement. That's one reason NREL partners with Transamerica. The Leadership Team wants your time at NREL and afterward to be second to none.

As you read through this edition, I hope that you get a sense not only of the importance we place on your safety and good health, but how those qualities can bring more fulfillment to your lives—and ensure that NREL has everyone on board to fulfill its mission.

Thanks for keeping yourself and others safe and healthy.

Martin Keller

Meet Our Contributors

For this issue, Campus Connections partnered with local students at Front Range Community College (FRCC). Along with learning more about NREL, they got to practice their interviewing, researching, and writing skills to produce stories for this issue.

Dehnal Tena

Dehnal Tena is a staff writer and editor for the student newspaper at FRCC. He plans on receiving a journalism degree at Metropolitan State University of Denver. During his free time, he loves to listen to music, play video games with friends, and dote on his cat Dexter.

Phoenix Schaefer

Phoenix Schaefer is in their final year at FRCC and is graduating with their Associate of Arts in communication. When they aren't busy with school, they like to crochet, play video games, and listen to music.

Zeke Goldman

Zeke Goldman is a student at FRCC with a passion for business and the news. Born in Los Angeles, he has lived in Boulder, Colorado, since high school.

Cover Photo by Agata Bogucka, NREL 98379

By Dehnal Tena

Mentally, **We're Here**

Nine tips to help cultivate mental health

Caroline Azoulay, the lab's new mental health lead.

Ask **Caroline Azoulay**, and she'll say our mental health influences, well, everything. "It impacts our work, it impacts our relationships, it impacts our relationship with ourselves, it impacts our physical health," she said. Before becoming NREL's mental health lead, Caroline was a social worker and addictions counselor for more than 10 years, during which she served as the clinical director of a substance abuse treatment center in Colorado.

At NREL, Caroline's many responsibilities include helping employees transition back to work after mental health leave, providing related guidance to managers, and offering resources to employees via appointment or trainings. Here, she shares some tips to cultivate mental health and wellness both at and outside of work.

1. You don't need to be in a mental health crisis to utilize NREL's mental health resources, which include 10 free counseling sessions and support for parents and caregivers through Spring Health, NREL's employee assistance program.

2. Make sure you have hobbies outside of work, are following a routine, and are monitoring your diet and exercise. Caroline enjoys hiking, camping, skiing, and playing video games like Path of Exile and board games like Frosthaven.

3. Build a community: NREL has lots of resources to help foster connections, including several personal and professional groups and employee-led wellness classes.

4. Feeling overwhelmed? Consider attending one of Caroline's "Coping with Uncertainty" sessions, where she provides coping resources and strategies and allows NRELians to process their emotions at large.

5. Take breaks at work. Get up, walk around, and get those endorphins flowing to improve creativity and innovation.

6. Set healthy work boundaries. When you log off, stay logged off. Try to avoid answering those late-night emails or early-morning phone calls.

7. No matter where you are in your career, it's worth taking some time to reflect on your work and make sure it's still in line with your values. If not, consider a pivot—it's never too late.

8. If you're an early- or middle-career employee, establish relationships with leaders or mentors that can offer support. And if you're a late-career employee, consider becoming a mentor. "Giving back to other people, like sharing our legacy and our knowledge, has a wonderful impact on us," said Caroline.

9. If retirement is on the horizon, consider what life will be like when you leave work. It can be hard to transition when your career was a significant part of your identity and lifestyle for decades.

See all the mental health resources NREL has to offer:
thesource.nrel.gov/mental-health

By Kelsey Lindsey

Go Out and Explore

NREL's South Table Mountain (STM) campus is filled with spots to take a mental health break. You just need to know where to look.

1 While cycling to work can provide a boost of serotonin, a flat tire will quickly steal that good mood. The STM campus has seven repair stations for bike-related emergencies, some with e-bike and scooter charging stations. Find them outside of the Field Test Laboratory Building, Solar Energy Research Facility (SERF), Science & Technology Facility, Energy Systems Integration Facility, Research Support Facility (RSF), and Integrated Biorefinery Research Facility.

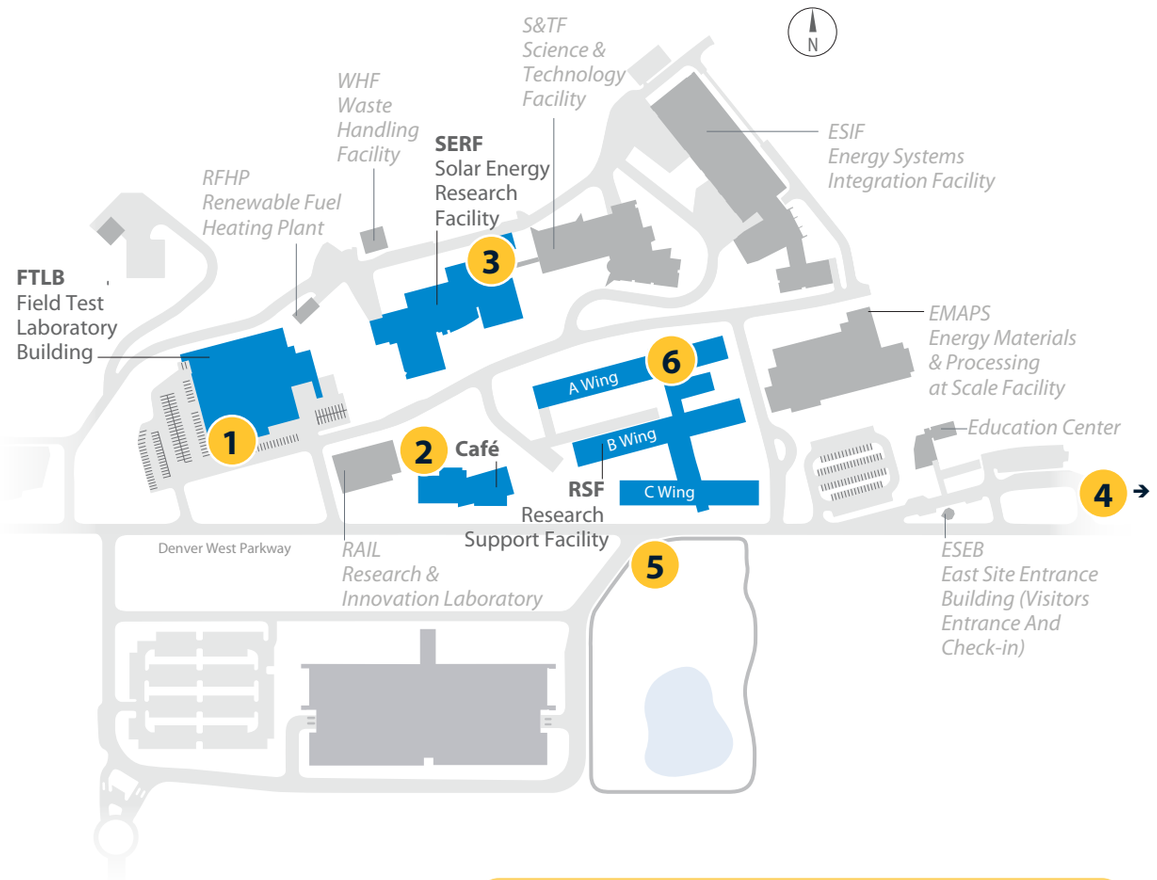
2 The plaza outside of the Café offers plenty of tables and seating for an alfresco lunch break. Grab a coworker for a friendly game of ping pong or foosball: tables and equipment are available for anyone ready for the challenge.

3 While the RSF gym is the go-to destination for cardio and group workouts (it hosts many weekly employee-led classes), there's another, more intimate exercise spot at the back of SERF. This window-lined area offers a barbell, medicine balls, free weights, stretching bar, and more for all your anaerobic activities.

4 Nestled at the foot of its namesake, the STM campus has access to numerous hiking trails available for an active lunch break. A favorite is the South Mesa Trail, which starts just past the east entrance gate. Take the Cretaceous Trial to the Basalt Cap Loop for a 2.06-mile tour of the mesa with views of the Front Range, Denver, and the lab.

5 If you're looking for a less strenuous jaunt, the South Arroyo Trail is a 0.35-mile loop perfect for a small break or walking meeting. Find the entrance across the street from the RSF.

6 Catch a dose of zen with an 18-minute chair massage from Dominique Skeehan, offered two afternoons a week in RSF X214. Massages are by appointment only and cost $23; contact her at domskee@aol.com or 303-937-7242 to be added to the email list and schedule a session.



Employees enjoy a nature hike at STM.
Photo by Joe DelNero, NREL 82671

Inspired? Capture a photo of yourself at one (or more!) of these on-campus destinations to be entered into a drawing to win NREL swag. Email your photos to **kelsey.lindsey@nrel.gov** along with your name and the names of any NRELians who joined you.

By Phoenix Schaefer

The Right Gear for the Job

Recommendations from hardcore bike commuters

Walk around any NREL campus, and you're sure to find at least a few bikes parked outside. And while that number may decrease during winter months, it doesn't have to. We asked our most rugged bike commuters at NREL's Alaska Campus for their gear recommendations for any temperature—whether that's at, above, or ***way, way, way*** below freezing.

Poagies

These mitten-type attachments for the handles of your bike are especially helpful for protecting your hands while commuting in Alaska's subzero temperatures. "Without poagies, I don't think I would be able to shift the gears on my bike," said researcher **Robbin Garber-Slaght**.

Bike Light

Fairbanks, where the NREL Alaska Campus is located, sees about three hours of sunlight on the shortest day of the year. "A good bike light is absolutely necessary in winter," said Robbin. She recommends a NiteRider Lumina, which is available in 10 different sizes and brightnesses.

Helmet

Although obvious, **Chan Charoonsophonsak**, a mechanical engineering researcher, is right to list a helmet as one of his must-haves. He also appreciates his fat bike, a type of cycle with very wide tires to help provide good grip on snow as he rides to work.

Reflective Gear

Chan also suggests reflective gear to help you be seen and stay safe from approaching vehicles. Most cycling gear has reflective elements built in, but for full visibility consider adding a high-vis sash, belt, or vest over your kit.

Balaclava

While Chief Scientist **Tom Marsik** (pictured on the left) has experimented with wearing goggles to protect his eyes from the cold, they fog up when it drops to -40 degrees. He found that a breathable balaclava that covers both his mouth and nose usually does the trick. "I pinch the eye holes with my fingers to make them shaped more like narrow slits, so I still have a reasonable peripheral vision while minimizing exposure to the cold air," he said.

By Kelsey Lindsey

Sit up Straight!

And other important ergonomic musts

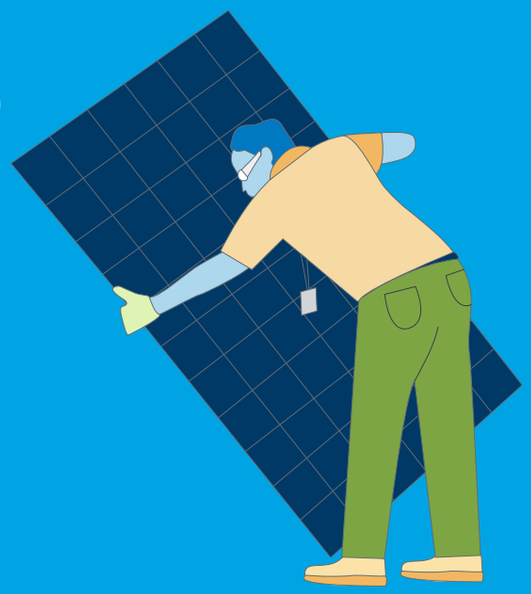
Although hardhats and protective gear may be your first thought when considering workplace safety, a correct workstation setup can also help you avoid occupational injury and illness. Proper posture, equipment, and hazard avoidance can prevent musculoskeletal disorders, the leading cause of high disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in Colorado, according to NREL's Ergonomic Professional **Kelsey Townsend**. "Ergonomics helps lower DALYs," said Kelsey. "My goal isn't just to improve working postures and work experience but also promote a higher quality of life outside work too."

Ready to test your ergo knowledge? Spot the incorrect workplace setup from the three here.

A

B

C



CORRECT: This lab worker has adjusted her biosafety cabinet and stool so that her work is at elbow height. There's enough leg room below the cabinet, and she is maintaining good posture, with her head, neck, and trunk in alignment. Lastly, she is taking lots of breaks to stretch (not pictured).

- Work is 6" past the hood face
- Lab equipment is within easy reach.

A

CORRECT: This desk worker has their computer screen positioned about an arm's length away, with the top of the monitor at eye level. Their arms are supported by the chair's armrests and bent at 90 degrees, feet are flat on the ground, and wrists are straight and relaxed. They've also adjusted their office chair to support the lower back and promote a straight posture in the neck and shoulders.

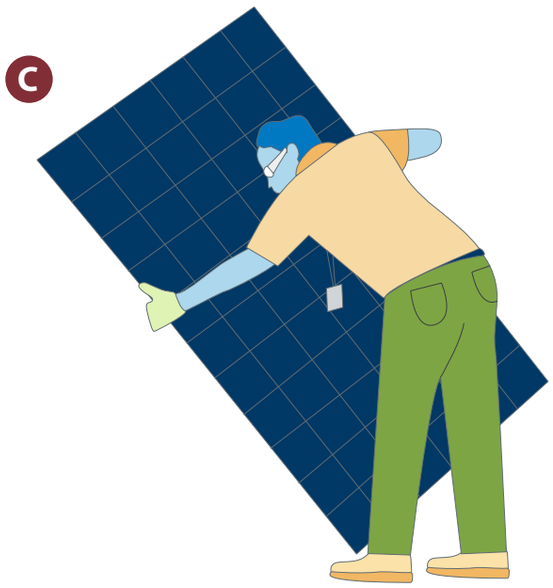
- Desk height is at elbow height
- The keyboard is close to the body
- The knees are a couple inches away from the front of the seat.

B

INCORRECT: This employee is bending at the waist, using his back instead of legs, and straining to pick up a large solar panel by himself—all actions that can lead to injury. Proper form for handling materials includes standing close to the object, bending your knees, and keeping your back straight and tummy tight while slowly lifting. The awkward size and weight of this panel means it's a two-person lift.

- Solar panel is far away
- Knees are not bent
- Head, neck, and torso are not aligned.

C



By Caleigh Avramis

9,000 Steps. 100 Doors. 1 Strange Smell.

It's a typical day for acting Laboratory Protection Supervisor Sean Schmida

Sean Schmida, an acting laboratory protection supervisor, is ready to share what goes into providing a secure, safe, and resilient environment for the South Table Mountain (STM) community—whether it's site security, emergency management, or dealing with some funky smells.

Growing up in Littleton, Colorado, Sean lived close to a fire station that he visited often with his mom. He'd slip into oversized fire boots and picture himself one day steering the big red fire truck, a dream that he pursued after childhood. "I like making sure everyone is safe," Sean said.

The dream came true. Sean became a firefighter and, when he wasn't rescuing people from burning buildings, he got satisfaction from simpler acts of service, like helping someone find something they lost. "Seeing the smile on their face is rewarding," Sean said.

But after serving in Durango for 22 years, the job began to take a mental and physical toll on Sean. "I had to see a lot of difficult stuff, and it was stressful," Sean said. "We would work 48 hours straight and sometimes not get any sleep on that shift."

In 2023, Sean decided it was time for a new, thrilling chapter. After exploring various job opportunities in the public-safety industry, he found his calling as an acting laboratory protection supervisor at NREL.

So, what does a typical day at work look like for Sean? We tagged along on one of his shifts to find out.

3 p.m. Sean steps into the Research Support Facility and meets with the day shift supervisors before checking in with the night shift managers about their tasks for the day.

3:30 p.m. Sean patrols the STM buildings, logging 9,000 steps and collecting radios, keys, and NREL security cars used by the last shift.

5 p.m. When employees head home, it's Sean's time to shine. He meticulously checks every building on campus, ensuring that more than 100 exterior doors are locked and functioning.

Acting laboratory protection supervisor Sean Schmida is photographed during his swing shift duties at NREL's STM campus.
Photo by Gregory Cooper, NREL 84811

> "I like making sure everyone is safe," Sean said.

7 p.m. Next up, he assigns his team to different buildings outside the campus—at Mesa Top, South Table Mountain Energy Park, Denver West Building 16, Flatirons Campus, ReFUEL, and the Golden Warehouse—to make sure everything is securely locked with no alarms blaring.

But that's not the only thing they do in their routine; sometimes, they investigate unusual smells in the buildings.

"In those situations, the hazmat team will investigate what kind of gas is causing the smell," Sean said. "They found out some of the sinks were bringing up methane, making it smell like sewage in the Science and Technology Facility. Those kinds of things sure bring excitement to my shift!"

9 p.m. The rest of Sean's day consists of training two new employees. They discuss how to respond to various scenarios like active shooters and medical emergencies, learn about power outages, and map out the location of every fire alarm in each building.

"One of the toughest parts is memorizing all this information and remembering where everything is," Sean said.

10 p.m. Sean and his trainees then carry out security drills, which include monitoring cars coming in and out of campus.

11 p.m. After a whirlwind of activity, Sean ends his shift by meeting with the graveyard supervisors, discussing the next day's tasks. Finally, he makes his way home around midnight, feeling tired but fulfilled.

"NREL is an amazing place to work. The benefits and the people are great," Sean said. "It's nice to have a workplace that appreciates its employees."

Photo by Gregory Cooper, NREL 84811

By Emily Mousel

Safety Scripts

Sometimes, the right words are all you need to avoid an unsafe workplace scenario

Scenario #1:
A Close Call in the Glove Box

You notice a researcher gripping a chemical container and a capped needle in the same hand. They are trying to unscrew the needle's cap with the other hand.

- **You:** "Careful! If that needle slips, it could puncture your glove and your skin."
- **Researcher:** "But I don't want to set it down and risk contamination."
- **You:** "I get it, but let's think through the safest approach. Loosen the cap first before handling the needle and maybe use a blunt-tip needle to reduce puncture risk."
- **Researcher:** "Good point. That's just as easy, and you're right, it is safer. I'll do it that way."

Key Takeaways:

Thinking ahead and making small adjustments—like changing the order of activities in a procedure or substituting a hazardous material—can prevent serious accidents. In this scenario, handling the needle posed a risk for a puncture wound. Having a plan for handling the needle can minimize the risk.

Scenario #2:
The Right Protection for the Job

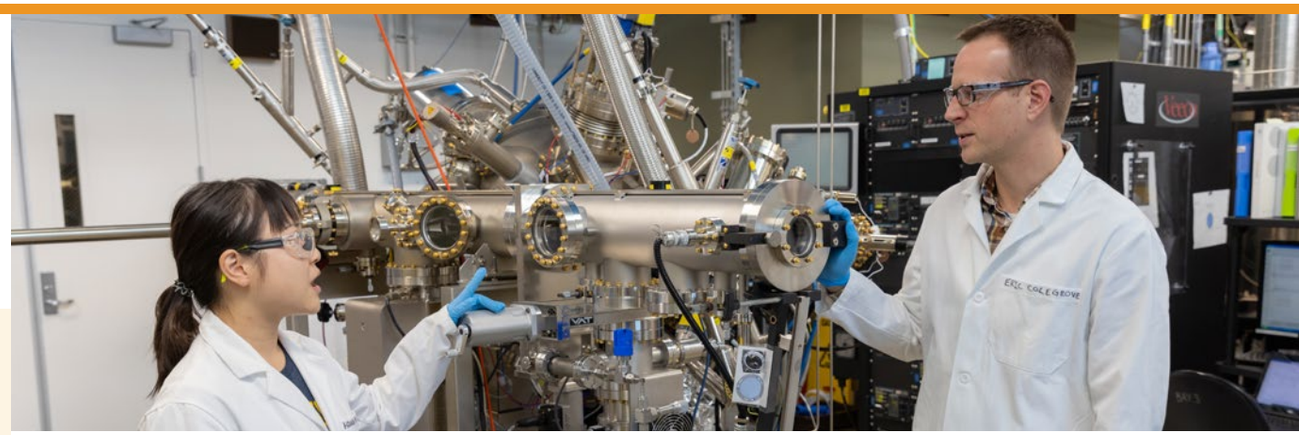
You notice a researcher quickly dispensing a mixture of ethanol, isopropyl alcohol, and other substances into a waste container. Suddenly, a droplet splashes up, slipping past the gap above their safety glasses and into their eye.

- **Lab partner:** "Ah! My eye!"
- **You:** "Let's flush it at the eyewash station, and then I'll escort you to the clinic." You help them rinse their eyes.
- **Lab partner:** "I thought my glasses would protect me."
- **You:** "I wonder if you could have used more appropriate personal protective equipment. If you knew there was a risk for a splash, perhaps chemical goggles could have protected you more than safety glasses."

Key Takeaways:

Cultivating a questioning attitude, especially during routine and low-risk activities, helps us stay aware of what could go wrong. Making small adjustments, like switching out personal protective equipment, can minimize risk and help everyone stay safe.

This incident should also be reported to a designated area representative, the research operations manager, or the environment, safety, and health point of contact. Doing so will lead to better safety for everyone as we learn from our mistakes.



Researchers Hongling Lott (left) and Eric Colegrove (right) discuss their work in front of the CdTe Molecular Beam Epitaxy (MBE). *Photo by Joe DelNero, NREL 84811*

Scenario #3:
Hidden Hazards in Construction Areas

You and your colleague are walking to an important meeting and you notice that your usual route is blocked by safety cones and a red danger tape barricade.

- **You:** "I didn't know there was construction happening today."
- **Colleague:** "I don't see any work going on; we can probably just cut through without anyone noticing. We're running late."
- **You:** "But…even if nothing is happening right now, there might be hazards we don't know about. Let's go around."
- **Colleague:** "You can go, but I need to get to the meeting because my staff is waiting. I'm going this way. I'll see you there!"
- **You:** "Hey, I care about your safety, and the last thing anyone would want to see is you getting hurt. The way you act sets an example for the people who work for you. If they saw you not valuing your own safety, they wouldn't think their safety is important either."
- **Colleague:** "You have a point. I'd rather be late than send the message that I don't care about safety. Let's go around the construction. Thanks for speaking up."

Key Takeaways:

Everyone is personally responsible for maintaining safety in the lab, both while performing work and in daily interactions with colleagues and staff.

Leaders value the safety legacy they create, and they should conduct their behavior in a way that demonstrates they care for others' safety too.

NREL workers, contractors and crane operators work on the expansion upgrade of the Hydrogen Storage Pad at the Energy Systems Integration Facility. *Photo by Dennis Schroeder, NREL 62284*

By Kelsey Lindsey

Monumental Outings

Get your steps—and sightseeing—in at NREL's D.C. office

Almost every weekday morning, Federal Affairs Manager **Rich Davidson** runs to drop off his son at daycare, then continues to NREL's Washington, D.C., office behind the Forrestal building, home to the U.S. Department of Energy. This 3.6-mile run takes him past storied institutions like the U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, and Library of Congress.

"If I had a bigger jogging stroller, I could probably operate a decent sight-seeing business," Rich says. "The run is a wonderful way to soak in Washington and get some exercise in the process."

Whether you're one of Rich's officemates or just visiting D.C., you can follow in his footsteps: the office's proximity to some of the nation's greatest museums and monuments is an easy excuse to stretch your legs and visit some iconic national landmarks.

Here, we highlight some destinations for a short walk or lunchtime run.

Washington Monument
.71 miles, 1,420 steps

Built over the course of 40 years, this obelisk was the tallest building in the world at the time of its completion in 1884.

National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden
.41 miles, 820 steps

Take your lunch break surrounded by 21 modern sculptures by artists including Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Indiana.

Japanese Lantern
.88 miles, 1,760 steps

This 350-year-old lantern, a gift from Japan, is lit during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival, where thousands of visitors descend on the Tidal Basin to witness the Yoshino cherry trees' spring bloom

U.S. Capitol
.99 miles, 1,980 steps

A westerly stroll along the National Mall will take you past the U.S. Botanical Garden and Garfield Memorial, landing you at the steps of the Capitol building.

Moongate Garden
.10 miles, 200 steps

Located in the Enid A. Haupt Garden behind the Smithsonian Castle, this relaxing retreat features two large granite moon gates and a calming water feature.

Lincoln Memorial to Tidal Basin to Forrestal loop
3.93 miles, 7,860 steps

This loop packs a historic punch: head east from Forrestal to pass the Washington Monument and run along the reflecting pool toward the Lincoln Memorial. Then head south for a loop around the Tidal Basin, where you'll pass memorials to Korean War veterans, Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Thomas Jefferson.

By Zeke Goldman

Healthy Savings

Get your finances in tip-top shape

Maribel Robel, NREL's Transamerica retirement plan consultant, wants to make sure your finances are strong and healthy. In her 22 years with the company, she's talked with thousands of employees about their retirement and spending, helping anyone from early-career employees to seasoned financial wizzes. "We have people who come in and know everything you need to know, and then we have people who don't know much," she said. "It's fulfilling to help them and make a difference in peoples' lives."

Here, Maribel answers some questions to help us become—and stay—financially healthy.

How do people in their 20s and 30s start saving for retirement?

- **Start as soon as you can—the sooner the better.** And if you have a retirement plan through your employer, make sure you are maximizing any employer contribution—for NREL, that's a 50% match up to 5% of your eligible pay.

What is a healthy approach to credit cards?

- **Be careful with credit cards and remember they are someone else's money.** You do need credit cards because you need a credit history, but be sure that you are paying off those cards every month. Be responsible.

What are some essential tips to help get your finances organized?

- **Start with an understanding of how much money is coming in and how much is flowing out.** Once you have a good handle on that, determine your essential expenses, then allocate the leftover money to the things you want. We at Transamerica look at saving for retirement as an essential expense, and it's good to make sure you are also saving for emergencies. From there, have an idea about your short-term and long-term goals, like getting married, paying for college, and saving for a house.

What are some common financial mistakes that people tend to make?

- **Debt.** For a lot of younger people, once you start getting that income, there are a lot of places where you can spend that money. So, make sure you have a good handle on your financials and don't overspend. It's so easy to do that. A budget is a good baseline.

Many people just aren't organized enough. Think of your saving goals like a road trip—you need to plan your road trip, have an idea of what you need for the trip, and figure out where you're going. With these things, you'll have an idea of what steps you need to take to accomplish your financial goals. (I know this is similar to what we just talked about, but it's worth repeating because it really is that essential!)

Any final advice you would like to add?

- **It's important to know that the benefits your employer offers are part of your pay.** Make sure that you know what these benefits are and use them as much as possible.

Interested in learning more about NREL's retirement services? Check out the **Retirement Plans page on theSOURCE**.

By Kelsey Lindsey

Meditate on It

Alexis Pascaris thinks we can all benefit from some mindfulness

Alexis Pascaris, a social scientist and subject matter expert in agrivoltaics.

It's 8:10 a.m. Monday morning, and I'm facing my computer screen, taking deep breaths and trying to find my inner peace. No, this isn't a stress response to before-hours work—Alexis Pascaris, a social scientist and subject matter expert in agrivoltaics with the Strategic Energy Analysis Center, is leading a virtual meditation session, guiding a group of us through a series of grounding and breathing exercises. For more than a year, NRELians have logged into these 40-minute Monday sessions seeking a peaceful transition into the workweek. During each session, participants become more relaxed, the long to-do list occupying their thoughts slowly vacating.

Alexis started meditating as a senior in high school in Livonia, Michigan, when she took a yoga class for gym credit. "I became an avid practitioner. It changed my body, it changed my mind, it changed my life," she said. After graduating from Michigan State University, she participated in multiple yoga teacher trainings, eventually offering donation-based workshops and weekly classes while attending Michigan Technological University for graduate school. As she taught different styles of hatha yoga, she slowly gravitated towards the mental over the physical. "If I had to choose between doing a sun salutation and meditating, I would choose meditating," she said. "We live in a culture preoccupied with body image, and I want to work in direct opposition to that. I want to identify with other aspects of my being."

Soon after Alexis moved to Colorado in 2023 for her position with NREL's InSPIRE team, she reached out to **Chandra Shah**, who leads the 12:15 p.m. meditation class on Wednesdays. "I said, 'I'm thinking about offering a different class at a different time to increase optionality for staff,'" she recounted. This consistent gathering has helped Alexis stay accountable to her meditation practice and make it available to all employees. "I really don't like when there's a financial barrier to people engaging in meditation or yoga," she said. "So, if I can play a role to provide open access, I want to do that."

Each class is different, but in the one I joined, Alexis first led with a body scan, drawing our attention to how we were feeling that morning. Then, she transitioned to a breathing exercise—deep breath in, pause, then breath out. Repeating this breathing pattern, first with her prompts, then without, helped me focus less on both past and upcoming events.

In starting their workweek with her—or with **Heather Goetsch**, who subs in around once a month—Alexis hopes that NRELians will experience the clarity and calm a consistent meditation practice can offer, as well as other benefits such as increased self-compassion, improved attention, and lower cortisol levels and blood pressure. "The aftermath of meditation is with me all day," Alexis said. "I'm more productive and efficient and very organized at work; things don't slip through the cracks."

And although Alexis meditates daily, she recognizes that a consistent routine takes time to build. For people new to meditation, she suggests first linking meditation to movement, like taking a vinyasa or restorative yoga class, hiking, swimming, or biking. Creating a space at home—whether that's a corner of a room or just a nightstand—as a visual reminder to meditate can also help, as well as monitoring technology use, especially before bedtime. "The last hour before sleep can be fruitful for your practice and rest," said Alexis. Ultimately, no matter what approach we take, every stepping stone is valuable—***just keep breathing, in and out, in and out***.

Welcome Interns!

In May, NREL welcomed around **160 interns** from more than **65 universities** across North America. Here, we rounded up some fun events for interns to connect, network, and explore the laboratory this summer. For a full list and more information, visit the Events page on theSource.

June 18: DOE Intern Seminar Series: Mental Health

June 24: South Table Mountain Campus Sustainability Tour

July 8: South Table Mountain Campus Tour

July 10: Intern Talk with NREL Director Martin Keller

July 15: Flatirons Campus Tour

July 23: DOE Intern Seminar Series: Fueling Fusion Energy

July 29: Intern Networking with Coffee

July 30: Intern Alumni Panel

August 4 and 25: Intern Session: Know Before You Go

August 7: Summer Staff Picnic

August 8: NSF Ice Core Facility Tour

Co-op intern works on autonomous electron microscopy at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.
Photo by Brooke Buchan, NREL 97676

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