

## NMSU Animal and Range Sciences Interim Department Head Honored with Friend of Safety Award

Writer: Angela Simental

Dr. Dennis Hallford, New Mexico State University's Animal and Range Sciences interim department head, past chair of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and chair of the University Radiation Safety Committee received this year's annual Friend of Safety Award for his contributions to the longstanding improvement of safety in these areas.

Katrina Doolittle, Executive Director for NMSU's Environmental Health & Safety, presented the golden globe award to Dr. Hallford. The Friend of Safety distinction and award is given to a NMSU employee who has implemented safety programs or policies that have positively and significantly impacted their department or college and resulted in improved safety culture overall.

"The safety achievements that are recognized by this award must be more than what the person is responsible for in their day-to-day work," Doolittle said. "We only recognize those who go above and beyond what is required, and do it in such a way that it persist over time. The accomplishments must be far-reaching and considered a permanent improvement in the safety program that they are responsible for creating."

Hallford received the award because of his

commitment to research oversight committees at NMSU for 30 years, adding elements of safety that did not previously exist.



"With his leadership and the support of the committee, we now have strong safety programs for all animal workers and all who use ionizing radiation at NMSU. He not only ensured compliance, he took it to the next level with the safety components of these programs," Doolittle said. "I have watched the safety culture of the workers improve in these areas of research where there are animal handling risks, potential disease and radiation hazards. Dr. Hallford kept the safety of the individual and good safe science at the forefront, and he is also responsible for the compliance improvements that are now core safety programs in both areas."

- report, NMSU received letter of resolution with no penalty.
- Completed nine detailed reports in compliance with NMSU's Title V Air Permit, and natural gas usage tracking under Federal Greenhouse Gas Management Plan.
- Continued support of Biosafety Program through committee application reviews, provisions for monthly training facility, registration and maintenance of records. Provide waste management and disposal of biohazardous wastes generated by laboratories.
- An emergency preparedness health disaster tabletop was held with 50 representatives from NMSU and regional agencies, including Department of Health and SW Border Food Safety and Defense. We produced a formal after action report.
- Lead the development of NMSU's Hazard Mitigation Plan to be incorporated in the Dona Ana County Hazard Mitigation Plan and awaiting approval by FEMA
- Issued validation for 1212 drivers licenses and as many permits, of which 207 were for utility cart use; this is slightly less than previous four year average.
- Second place Research Council Creative Activities award for Minimum Personal Protective Equipment poster

## **NMSU CHEMICAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT HEAD HONORED WITH FRIEND OF SAFETY AWARD**

Writer: Tiffany Acosta

David A. Rockstraw, New Mexico State University Chemical Engineering Department Head and Robert Davis Distinguished Achievement Professor, has been honored as a "Friend of Safety." He was recognized by Environmental, Health & Safety for his efforts to enhance the culture of environmental, health and safety at the university.



"What impressed me the most last year was when Dr. Rockstraw drove an explosive compound from his department over to our lab and then personally led the deactivation of the explosive," said Drew Kaczmarek, EH&S assistant director. "Dr. Rockstraw took ownership of a high hazard material and safely stabilized the material to a state where it could be sent off as a regular hazardous waste - also literally saving thousands of dollars that would have been needed to bring in an explosive expert."

In a surprise announcement at the engineering roundup, Jan. 13, Rockstraw was presented with an engraved globe, representing the impact safety leaders make in the world.

"I was surprised at the safety award because I didn't know that EH&S offered such an award," Rockstraw said. "This was a team award earned by every member of the Chemical Engineering Department who thinks often about safety; I was just the one doing a lot of the talking."

Under Rockstraw's leadership the culture of laboratory safety has made positive strides. He established requirements for minimum personal protective equipment and enforces the policy. The Chemical Engineering Department has gone nearly two years without lost research work or laboratory-related injury.

For graduate research in the Chemical Engineering Department, Rockstraw requires all work processes be written and approved by experts on the various hazards before work can begin. He created a required monthly safety seminar for chemical engineering faculty, staff and students, fire extinguisher training and case studies of chemical lab and chemical plant accidents.

In addition, Rockstraw directed a workshop to train Chemical Engineering personnel to self-audit the entirety of the department's facilities, compiled more than 100 findings from the audits, and then ensured each of the findings were corrected.

In the department, Rockstraw established the Sentinel for Safety awards program and an occupational safety webpage ([http://chemeng.nmsu.edu/che\\_safety.htm](http://chemeng.nmsu.edu/che_safety.htm)) where Chemical Engineering personnel can find needed safety-related resources. Rockstraw also was honored with the Donald C. Roush Excellence in Teaching Award at the 2014 spring convocation ceremony.

Created in 2008, the "Friend of Safety" award was inspired by two professors, Chemistry Professor Michael Johnson and Regents Professor in Plant and Environmental Sciences, Mary O'Connell, whom have strived to improve safety in the science areas.

## **FS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Environmental Health & Safety was reorganized to Facilities and Services (FS) in July 2010 and has participated in FS's customer satisfaction survey each year with positive improvements. There was a decrease in the number of respondents that have utilized EH&S services from 2012 to 2013; however, there was an overall positive response regarding the knowledge, helpfulness, and friendliness of EH&S staff. The only area of dissatisfaction was the EH&S website, which was not seen as user-friendly or helpful by 13% of respondents.

From the survey, FS determined 133 respondents had utilized EH&S's services in 2013. EH&S was graded from "Very Dissatisfied" to "Very Satisfied" by each respondent in each of the following categories:

- EH&S understands the needs and requirements of the user's department
- EH&S is accessible to its customers
- EH&S consultation helped facilitate the resolution of the user's problem or issue
- EH&S website is user friendly and helpful in providing access to information, forms, manuals, etc. that the user needs
- EH&S staff provide effective training
- EH&S staff responds to requests, or problems, in a timely manner
- EH&S staff are knowledgeable in their areas of specialty
- EH&S staff are friendly and helpful when contacted for services

The results of the survey are shown in the graph below.