

**NOMINATION FOR THE  
2016 USGS SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

**KIMBERLY BEISNER**

The USGS Arizona Water Science Center (AWSC) nominates Kim Beisner for the Safety and Occupational Health Award of Excellence for her actions demonstrating commitment to safety by initiating a metals exposure assessment for a new water quality project, the Yuma Mine Project. Safety should be at the forefront of thinking when engaging in a field-based project, especially when initiating work in a new area with unknown hazards. Ms. Beisner effectively focused on both safety and science in the initiation of her Yuma Mine Project, and completed the safety evaluation in advance of field work. In balancing these critical aspects of project planning, she serves as an excellent example for other USGS project chiefs.

Ms. Beisner was extremely proactive in ensuring the safety of her and her field team while collecting soil samples from and near mine tailings that potentially posed a health risk. She developed both a project Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) as well as a site specific JHA. She contacted the AWSC safety specialist with questions about field practices required to minimize staff exposure to metals in the soil. The safety specialist then took her questions to the regional safety manager, who then contacted Paul Calleo, a USGS Industrial Hygienist/ Safety Specialist. Mr. Calleo and Ms. Beisner joined the field team at the site on their initial soil-sampling collection trip. An exposure assessment and air sampling was conducted at the site to evaluate exposure hazards. The resulting report outlined the results of the air sampling and provided recommendations to project field staff. To ensure staff safety during the collection of data for the exposure assessment, Ms. Beisner provided appropriate personal with protective equipment and training.

Ms. Beisner's conscientious efforts towards safety enabled her to ensure that the potentially unsafe work environment of collecting samples at an abandoned lead mine tailing deposit would be safe for her and for all of her field assistants. She truly represents the face of safety and her actions are a outstanding example of safety first in the field environment.

Nominated By: James Leenhouts, Director, Arizona Water Science Center, 520-670-6671 x278  
Supported By: Max Ethridge, Regional Director, Southwest Region, 303-236-5438

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**FLETCHER BRINKERHOFF**

Fletcher Brinkerhoff is an outstanding Collateral Duty Safety Program Coordinator in the USGS Arizona Water Science Center (AWSC). He plays a critical role in tracking, understanding, and prioritizing risks faced by the AWSC employees and communicating those risks and their resolutions to the Center Director. The Center Director relies heavily on Mr. Brinkerhoff to provide explanations and recommendations that result in important safety decisions.

During the 2015 Southwest Region's facility and field external safety audit, Mr. Brinkerhoff accompanied the Water Mission Area Regional Safety Manager to all four Center facilities and 32 field sites. His knowledge and awareness of local site hazards exceeded all expectations for a comprehensive external audit. His presence during the field audit provided insight into the safety hazards associated with the desert, mountains and illegal immigration and its effect on the land. He is currently developing a Hazard Elimination Log based on the hazards discovered during the field audit and his attention to detail and innovation are exceptional.

During the audit Mr. Brinkerhoff conducted a Fall Protection class and a hands-on exercise at an extremely hazardous stilling well on the side of a cliff standing 20 feet above the water. His experience with ropes, knots, fall protection equipment and rescue techniques is exemplary. He trained staff on types of equipment for different situations, taught them how to properly fit the fall arrest equipment, and how to use the equipment to access cleanout ports in the stilling well. Mr. Brinkerhoff personally set up a fall protection system with an anchored steel cable to demonstrate the use of the cable to prevent a potentially serious accident. To ensure a safe working environment he also set up a backup system utilizing mountain climbing equipment; ropes, knots, carabineers, anchor points, etc., and attached each trainee to both the anchored cable and the rope backup system for hands-on experience. After each student practiced a safe descent to the bottom of the stilling well, he spent time preparing a rescue scenario and each student had an opportunity to practice rescuing a colleague in distress.

In the rocky mountain region there are many science centers requiring fall protection along with hands on training. The AWSC has agreed to make Mr. Brinkerhoff available for training staff at other science centers where his teaching skill, technical knowledge of the equipment, and rescue techniques will greatly benefit both the Office of Safety and Health Administration and the Bureau's occupational safety and health requirements for fall protection instructors and employee training.

As an outcome from this training, Mr. Brinkerhoff has developed individual Fall Protection Plans for all Center sites that require fall protection as well as a method to include these Fall Protection Plans in the Site Information Management System (SIMS). Including the Fall Protection Plans in SIMS makes them available to everyone in the USGS, records the Plan with the station ID along with all the other SIMS safety features for that site, and reduces the

likelihood of Plans getting destroyed or lost. Mr. Brinkerhoff's insight to archive these Plans in SIMS is a unique contribution to the Water Mission Area fall protection program which can be expanded to meet other Bureau fall protection requirements.

Mr. Brinkerhoff's enthusiasm, knowledge, skills, and forward thinking is deserving of the USGS Safety and Occupational Health Award of Excellence

Nominated By: Joseph Broadus, Regional Safety Officer, Southwest Region 936-271-5319  
Supported By: Max Ethridge, Regional Director, Southwest Region, 303-236-5438

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**BETH DEMITH**

On Friday August 28, 2015, a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Grand Canyon Monitoring Research Center Research Ecologist lost his life hiking down a trail within the Grand Canyon National Park. The USGS assembled a Serious Accident Investigation Team to examine the events leading up to this incident.

Ms. Beth Demith, Safety and Occupational Manager, Southeast Region, made significant contributions as the Serious Accident Investigation Team Chief Investigator and Safety Officer. Ms. Demith participated in the interviews of 10 Research Center employees and local management, and collected witness statements. She contributed to the development of the 72 Hour Report and the 45 Day Factual Report as well as the Management Evaluation which contained observations and recommendations that improves occupational safety and health hazard identification to prevent recurrence of another tragic loss of life of one of our own.

Nominated By: Wayne Martin, Deputy Chief, OSH, 703-648-5289

Supported By: Marjorie Davenport, Deputy Regional Director, Southeast Region, 678-924-6608  
Jess Weaver, Regional Director, Southeast Region, 678-924-6609

**NOMINATION FOR THE  
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**JULIA FIELDS**

Julia Fields has been an advocate and leader for Core Science Systems (CSS) Mission Area for Safety and Health since its realignment in 2010, and prior to that for the Geographic Information Office. Her active participation and knowledge of the Bureau occupational health and safety policies and protocols has made her invaluable to the employees and senior leadership team. Ms. Fields' attention to detail has afforded the CSS and its managers with an outstanding safety record over the years.

Ms. Fields was instrumental in helping develop a CSS Safety Charter and worked with the various Programs/Offices to identify members to the team. She also led efforts to develop and implement the CSS Annual Safety and Health Action Plan and led its implementation over the last 3 years, ensuring that the actions are completed on time and that any safety concerns or violations are corrected. Through this Action Plan, Ms. Fields, with support of the CSS senior leadership team, identified four categories for improving safety which include Communication, Training, Resources, and Accountability. The tasks within each category are reviewed and discussed at quarterly Safety Committee meetings and, if needed, actions are prioritized and corrected. One example of the result of her leadership is that every employee in the CSS has been made aware of local procedures for emergency calling, better preparing all employees for the potential for responding to emergencies in the workplace.

Ms. Fields has always been an active voice for safety and health related issues and consistently keeps herself abreast of the latest issues, policies, and protocols. As a collateral duty safety officer, Julie has always put 100 percent into supporting the safety and health of U.S. Geological Survey employees and should be recognized for this dedication.

Nominated By: Mark Naftzger, Deputy Associate Director for Core Science Systems, 703-648-4653  
Supported By: Michael Tischler, Director, National Geospatial Program, 703-648-4725  
Kevin Gallagher, Associate Director for Core Science Systems, 703-648-5747

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**EMMA HANSLOWE**

Emma Hanslowe has provided an excellent example of how to cultivate a culture of safety in the short time she has been employed by the Fort Collins Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Nowhere is this more apparent and important than how she encourages safety mindfulness with the interns working on USGS field research projects in the Everglades of Florida.

Ms. Hanslowe has taken the initiative in developing and disseminating multiple safety-related procedures and protocols. She participated in a WebEx training on how to recognize and mitigate symptoms of heat-related stress, and then educated USGS interns and other staff on what she had learned, including writing a short summary document for inclusion in the project manual.

Ms. Hanslowe compiled comprehensive vehicle safety bins for USGS field vehicles that include materials and supplies for a range of possible safety situations. She designed a new sign-out sheet with check-off boxes for field equipment and safety supplies so that interns will be more accountable for their own safety. She also regularly participates in fieldwork with interns to diplomatically dissuade complacency and maintain high safety standards while performing field research.

Ms. Hanslowe's ability to give diplomatic safety reminders to USGS interns allows her to remain a trusted mentor which ultimately helps the Center's projects cultivate a culture of safety. I am particularly impressed with Ms. Hanslowe in that she is employed as a Biological Technician who is functioning as a professional safety leader for the USGS.

Nominated By: Robert Reed, Research Wildlife Biologist, Fort Collins SC, 970-226-9464

Supported By: David Hamilton, Director, Fort Collins Science Center, 970-226-9383

Max Ethridge, Regional Director, Southwest Region, 303-236-5438

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**JAMES (RICK) HANLON**

James (Rick) Hanlon, Chief of the Oklahoma City field office, suggested that the Oklahoma Water Science Center check the date codes on the Center's fleet vehicle tires and trailers because tires more than 5 years old are more likely than newer tires to have sudden deflation incidents which could cause serious accidents.

As a result of Mr. Hanlon's suggestion, more than 20 tires were found to be older than 5 years, with some of those tires being more than 10 years old.

Mr. Hanlon's suggestion vastly improved the safety for Center employees and most probably diverted potential hazardous road situations for the employees and other motorists traveling on the highways with them. In addition, Mr. Hanlon's proactive approach to safety saved potential costs from vehicle damage.

Mr. Hanlon is to be commended for putting safety first for his fellow employees.

Nominated By: William Andrews, Director, Oklahoma Water Science Center, 405-810-4417  
Supported By: Max Ethridge, Regional Director, Southwest Region, 303-236-5438

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**SHELBY HUNTER**

Shelby Hunter is the Collateral Duty Safety Officer of the Oklahoma Water Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

Mr. Hunter developed and put into action a comprehensive inspection program of vehicle and trailer tire ages throughout the Center. These inspections identified specific tires or sets of tires that were most at risk for causing accidents.

Through the diligent work of Mr. Hunter, these tasks provided information needed to reduce the risk of serious accidents and injuries that could have affected USGS personnel and members of the public.

Nominated By: William Andrews, Director, Oklahoma Water Science Center, 405-810-4417

Supported By: Max Ethridge, Regional Director, Southwest Region, 303-236-5438

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**WILLIAM "BUDDY" HYDE**

William "Buddy" Hyde's primary duties are those of Maintenance Mechanic in the Wetland and Aquatic Research Center in Gainesville, Florida. Mr. Hyde has been promoting and enhancing Center safety for many years.

Mr. Hyde has gone above and beyond this past year with putting on excellent safety classes and acting as the sole instructor on many of them. He is a certified Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) instructor, certified All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) instructor, and is about to become a certified Wilderness First Aid instructor.

During fiscal year 2015, Mr. Hyde has taught as many as 17 safety classes including Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid, Over the Water safety, Inflatable Personal Flotation Device servicing, general and onsite ATV/UTV operation, Fire Suppression, Work Shop Safety, Motorboat and Forklift safety. Through these training classes, he has helped over 60 members of the local Center staff and USGS employees in the state of Florida to complete required training that would have been otherwise very difficult and costly to obtain.

Mr. Hyde has taken on these additional responsibilities simply out of his dedication to the safety of his fellow employees and his enjoyment of teaching and sharing with others the skills that ensure the mission of the USGS is done safely and efficiently.

Nominated By: Kenneth Rice, Director, Wetland and Aquatic Research Center, 352-264-3544

Supported By: Jess Weaver, Regional Director, Southeast Region, 678-924-6609

**USGS 2016 SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE  
(Justification)**

**DAVID NICHOLS**

On Friday August 28, 2015, a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Grand Canyon Monitoring Research Center Research Ecologist lost his life hiking down a trail within the Grand Canyon National Park. The USGS assembled a Serious Accident Investigation Team to examine the events leading up to this incident.

David Nichols, Associate Chief of Operations, Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center, made significant contributions as the Lead of the Serious Accident Investigation Team. He immediately organized the accident investigation and ensured the Team was on site within a day of initial notification. He oversaw the interviews of 10 Research Center employees, local management, and collected witness statements. As the USGS management representative for the investigation, Mr. Nichols served as the point of contact with the National Park Service (NPS) working with rangers, site investigators, and the liaison officer. He also worked with the Coconino County medical examiner, NPS Grand Canyon park superintendent and departmental safety and health officials.

Mr. Nichols sacrificed his weekends and many long hours thoroughly amassing an accurate accounting of the events leading up to this fatality. He authored the 72 Hour Report and the 45 Day Factual Report as well as the Management Evaluation which contained observations and recommendations that improves occupational safety and health hazard identification to prevent recurrence of another tragic loss of life of one of our own.

Nominated By: Wayne Martin, Deputy Chief, OSH, 703-648-5289

Supported By: Walter Barnhardt, Director, Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center,  
508-457-2355

Mark Bennett, Acting Regional Director, Northeast Region, 804-261-2643

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**JEFFREY SALLAS**

Jeffrey Sallas is a hydrologic technician at the Indiana-Kentucky Water Science Center. He has gone above and beyond his duties to advance the safety programs of not only the Center, but also the Midwest Regional, and USGS national safety programs.

While conducting stream measurements, Mr. Sallas noticed that there was a safety issue with the StreamPro solar covers (sun shield) breaking, resulting in very sharp edges. The edges were sharp enough to leave one of our technicians with stitches. On his own accord, he contacted Teledyne RD Instruments and made them aware of the safety issue. Teledyne took the issue seriously and constructed a new sun shield. To make sure their new sun shields would not break, they sent Mr. Sallas several shields to test out. After using them for 90 days, he reported back to Teledyne that they were working out well with no safety issues to report. Teledyne worked with the Hydrologic Instrumentation Facility (HIF) to get these items in stock, while Mr. Sallas also kept track of the issue. HIF reported back that the sun shields were now in stock and that they will replace the sun shields when the StreamPros are serviced. The improvement made to these shields will ensure the safety of field personnel in offices throughout the U.S. Geological Survey.

Mr. Sallas has also taken initiative to become an All Terrain Vehicle/Utility Terrain Vehicle instructor for the Midwest Region. He is an incredible asset to the Indiana-Kentucky Water Science Center, the Midwest Region, and national safety programs bureauwide.

Nominated By: Michael Griffin, Director, Indiana-Kentucky Water Science Center, 502-493-1913  
Supported By: Linda Leake, Deputy Regional Director, Midwest Region, 608-781-6263

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**JENNIFER SHARPE**

Jennifer Sharpe, a part-time collateral safety person in the Illinois Water Science Center, has taken an active role in Safety and Occupational Health activities in the Midwest Region. She volunteered to participate in a Midwest Region pilot effort by applying reflective decals to field vehicles within the Center as a part of the traffic control pilot study. Rear-ending of field vehicles on travel and when parked off the side of roads is a common risk any USGS field person encounters. The increased visibility of vehicles, due to the use of these reflective decals, has been shown to reduce this risk. Ms. Sharpe ensured that these decals were placed on the rear of all field vehicles for maximum visibility to provide the most benefit to the safety of the employees. Furthermore, she solicited input from the Center employees and provided feedback to the Midwest Region showing maximum employee engagement in the Occupational Safety and Health Program. Ms. Sharpe and the Regional Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Scott Lowe, briefed the regional Leadership Team, including the Regional Director, in June 2015 on this pilot effort. This briefing led to deployment of these decals throughout the Midwest Region. The deployment of these reflective decals is not a federal or state regulation, and therefore exceeded any Federal Safety requirement.

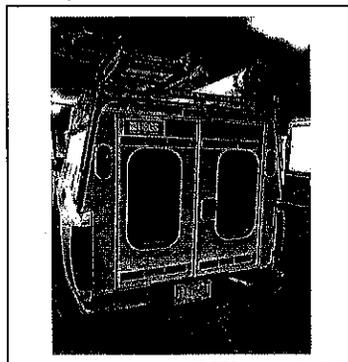
Ms. Sharpe also volunteered to develop a poster that advises USGS personnel on how to **Report an Unsafe Condition** in the workplace using the USGS Inspection and Abatement System. The poster, which has been shared with other Midwest Region centers, engages employees to report unsafe or unhealthful conditions for developing a safe and healthy workplace conditions. By encouraging employees that they can report to their supervisor, or how to report anonymously, she is maximizing potential for reporting which will prevent exposures to hazards and mitigate risks to all the employees. This poster effectively and efficiently provides the information.

Jennifer Sharpe repeatedly demonstrates an active approach and achievement of outstanding results for the Safety and Occupational Health in the Illinois Water Science Center and the Midwest Region.

Nominated By: Douglas Yeskis, Director, Illinois Water Science Center, 217-328-9706

Supported By: Linda Leake, Deputy Regional Director, Midwest Region, 608-781-6263

Red and White Reflective Vehicle Safety Decals:



POSTER: Report An Unsafe Condition



## REPORT AN UNSAFE CONDITION

Employees can report unsafe or unhealthful conditions in the workplace and request an inspection of the condition. Report unsafe conditions immediately to your supervisor and the situation will be addressed. However, an employee may choose to submit the report anonymously.

An employee may click on:

[https://www.smis.doi.gov/ias/report\\_unsafe\\_conditions\\_nologin.cfm](https://www.smis.doi.gov/ias/report_unsafe_conditions_nologin.cfm) to "Report Unsafe Conditions." Alternately, an employee may click on the Accidents Incidents drop down menu on the USGS Safety and Health Management page as shown in the screen shot below.

Employees should select the facility name under the state and click on Select Facility to begin. The conditions in these reports will then be tracked until they are resolved.

USGS  
Science for a changing world

### Safety and Health Management

For Internal USGS Access Only

- Home »
- Accidents Incidents »
- Emergency Information »
- Inspections/Audits/HAs »
- Helpful Links »
- Customer Survey »
- Regulations Reference »
- Library/Reading »
- Specialized & Hazards »

**Training »**

- DOI OWCP
- Performance Metrics/Rates

**REPORTING**

- A to Z
- [Report an unsafe condition](#)
- [Report an accident or incident](#)

**USEFUL TO**

- Reporting & Investigation Tools
- Trend Analysis
- O&H
- Employee
- Supervisor
- Collateral Duty Safety

**Safety Focus On**

**Be prepared when working in the field**

Search Internal USGS

**WHAT'S NEW**

- Interagency Accident Prevention Bulletin 15-02, Identification of Helicopter Landing Sites for Medical Transport/Evacuation (6/10/15)
- Labels Vehicle Airbag Recall (6/9/15)
- DOI Accident Prevention Bulletin 15-05, Aircraft Fuel Filters (6/0/15)

July 2015

**NOMINATION FOR THE 2016 USGS SAFETY AND HEALTH  
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**NICHOLAS SHEMA**

Nicholas Shema has demonstrated exceptional dedication, commitment, and contribution to aviation safety in the pursuit of new scientific knowledge through his actions, professionalism, and leadership.

As part of his overall duties as Safety Officer of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center (PIERC), Mr. Shema oversees a comprehensive aviation safety program which serves not only this Center, but also the Pacific Island Water Science Center (PIWSC), the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO), the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal and state partners throughout the state of Hawaii. Helicopter aviation is the largest part of this program, which includes point-to-point transportation of personnel and cargo, scouting for remote landing zones, and airborne surveys of volcanic hazards and wildlife. Mr. Shema serves as aviation manager and provides all safety training, maintains personal protective equipment, and is the contact for flight following. Advanced level training is required for many missions where personnel serve as aircrew members and who load scientific equipment to be transported to remote field sites. He has maintained a high level of safety practices during PIERC aviation missions and the safety records of all the Hawaiian units reflect a high standard of excellence.

Hawaiian units receive a higher level of training than is normally required because many of Mr. Shema's students need helicopter manager level training. Since the classes are mixed, he always teaches to the highest level of need. That higher level of aviation safety knowledge shows in the excellent aviation safety program evaluations of the PIERC, the PIWSC, and the HVO. These units have consistently met or exceeded all aviation program requirements and have served as examples to other USGS units.

Hawaiian science center directors, supervisors and administrative staffs are also knowledgeable about aviation safety practices because of Mr. Shema's training, operations management, and leadership. They have whole heartedly supported aviation safety along with the scientists and technicians in the field. He has enhanced the role of leadership and management in promoting a Culture of Safety.

Mr. Shema has served as a focal point for Pacific Island aviation safety and has fostered valuable cooperation between the USGS, Department of the Interior bureau partners, and other governmental organizations. His efforts and contributions have improved Interagency Aviation Training course content and effectiveness by sharing his best practices with the aviation safety instructor community. During times of changing methods of aircraft procurement, Mr. Shema developed a Standard Operating Procedure that has been used by many other USGS offices. He has provided advice and assistance to scientists from around the world who have used aircraft in the course of scientific work in the Pacific Islands.

Mr. Shema lives by the framing principles of aviation safety and has mentored others in their pursuit of excellence and professionalism in that field. He has improved employee engagement in safety and science by influencing a work environment that inspires employee participation. Over the years, Mr. Shema has written and improved numerous Center Aviation Management Plans, Aviation Mishap Response Plans, and Project Aviation Safety Plans. He has conducted risk assessment analysis and has prevented exposure to aviation hazards and mitigated risks for various scientific missions. Mr. Shema will have a lasting influence on Pacific Island aviation safety and science through his many coworkers and cooperators around the world.

This picture shows the incredible danger of flying in a volcano zone and the importance of the work of Nicholas Shema, Safety Officer, Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center.

This photo was taken during the Kamoamoia fissure eruption on March 9, 2011. Photo is provided by Janet Babb, Hawaiian Volcano Observatory.



Nominated By: Gordon Tribble, Director, Pacific Island Ecosystems Res. Center, 808-985-6457  
Supported By: Mark Sogge, Regional Director, Pacific Region, 916-278-9550

**NOMINATION FOR THE 2016 USGS SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
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**BENJAMIN J. SIEBERS**

The USGS Wisconsin Water Science Center nominates Ben Siebers, Hydrologic Technician, for his idea and effort to create boat safety buckets. These buckets are stored in a central location, are taken out with each boat trip, and returned to their storage location after each boat trip is completed.

The buckets have many necessary boat safety items which are listed below. Ben has ensured that items in these buckets are up-to-date and in good working condition. This effort went above and beyond Ben's primary duties and took a fair amount of time to do. Until Ben did this, the safety items on the Center's boats were often scattered and hard to find, missing or expired, and this put our staff potentially at risk.

This shows Ben's energetic and firm commitment to watercraft safety for everyone. We think it will make us all safer on the water and may be a great idea for other centers to incorporate into their boat safety program.



**Safety Bucket items may include:**

- |                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Bailing Device       | Tool Set      |
| Fire Extinguisher    | Flares        |
| Whistles or Air Horn | Batteries     |
| Bilge Pump           | First Aid Kit |
| Rescue Line          | Sunscreen     |
| Signal Flag          | Rope          |

Nominated By: John Walker, Director, Wisconsin Water Science Center, 608-821-3810

Supported By: Linda Leake, Deputy Regional Director, Midwest Region, 608-781-6263