



### Training Topic of the Month:

All new laboratory employees must receive Laboratory Safety training from EH&S as a requirement of the OSHA Laboratory Standard. While there is no OSHA requirement for refresher training in lab safety, we feel that regular review of lab safety topics is essential to a safe work place. Monthly reading of this newsletter will provide such a review. This month's topic is "Housekeeping".

Housekeeping-related problems are one of the top causes of laboratory accidents: Bench-tops that are too crowded often cause chemicals or equipment to fall and break while someone is trying to find a clean spot to place them. People trip and fall because aisles are crowded with stored materials and equipment. Serious accidents may become worse and responses delayed because eyewashes, safety showers or fire extinguishers are blocked.

A well-maintained laboratory provides a very favorable impression on outside auditors as well as with possibly influential visitors. It shows that the people in the laboratory care about the health and safety aspects of their workspace and that this is a priority for them. Safety culture is typically one of the primary things that the auditors and visitors are trying to monitor as they check out a lab.

Look over the following list of common housekeeping problems. Correct them if they appear in your laboratory. Please contact me if you need any assistance from EH&S.

1. Stored items are blocking aisles and often exit routes as well
2. Chemical and reagent containers are left throughout the lab instead of being returned to their proper storage areas. This greatly increases the chances of a chemical spill.

3. Unlabeled chemicals in containers or in beakers/flasks are present in the laboratory. These materials have a way of never being removed properly, since they often cannot be identified as to whether they should be saved or not.
4. The lab is very dirty; surfaces have not been cleaned in some time; there is evidence of old spills or leaks of chemicals (especially around balances, and in sinks and fume hoods).
5. Safety equipment is blocked. This includes storage underneath safety showers and blocking of eyewashes and fire extinguishers. **THIS IS A VERY COMMON PROBLEM!**
6. There is insufficient room to work on bench tops and in fume hoods. This is generally due to excessive storage of glassware, books, notebooks, apparatus, etc., that should be placed elsewhere.
7. Sinks are filled with used glassware or otherwise used for storage.
8. Cords, electrical and otherwise, block aisles and/or doorways, creating tripping hazards in the laboratory.
9. Boxes, books and equipment are precariously stored wherever a surface is found open.

After the initial problems are corrected, most people find it very easy to take a few minutes at the end of a day to properly put away the materials they have used and do a quick clean-up, helping to maintain the good housekeeping in the laboratory.

## **Laboratory Safety and Hazardous Waste Training**

<b>April 8, 2009</b>	9:30 AM to Noon	MI 328	<b>April 24, 2009</b>	9:30 AM to Noon	UC Rangos II
To register, go to <a href="http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/training/index.html">http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/training/index.html</a> and click on "Lab Safety and Hazardous Waste."					

As a special service, EH&S has prepared hazardous waste accumulation postings in other languages, to offer a more familiar way to remind lab workers of these requirements. Please check out our web page <http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/chemical/waste/index.html> to view and print out these postings. Let us know if you would like another language represented and we will try to oblige.

### Laboratory Air Quality

One of EH&S's most frustrating tasks involves responding to complaints from building occupants about odors in their offices or labs. There are times when our staff is unable to identify the material in question, unable to locate the source and unable to determine whether people in the area in question are safe remaining in their spaces.

While the problems are often unique, there are some things we have learned in our investigations that should be of interest.

First, given the patchwork of ventilation systems, drains and other building components in many of our buildings, odor sources in one location can travel and cause problems a long way away, often on different floor or wings of a building. For example, we recently had a drain disposal on the upper floor of Mellon Institute impact the first floor of the building. Also, chemical or other odors released in the area of an air intake may spread the odor throughout a building or space.

Second, it is EXTREMELY helpful if you notify EH&S if you spill any odorous material or (inadvertently) put one down the drain. This will help us prepare for the calls that will result from the incident and to understand the safety and health impacts promptly and react as necessary.

Third, there are some common problems that are easily solved. If there is a sulfur odor in your lab, check to see if you have a dry trap below a seldom-used sink. Running the tap for a few minutes will re-fill the trap and prevent sewer gas (a likely cause of the odor) for coming up through the drain. Burned out ballasts in light fixtures are often the cause of a burned electrical smell.

When we investigate your complaint, please try to provide us with as much information as you can, such as the identity of the material (or a description of it), whether it is growing stronger or weaker, how long it has been present and, if it is recurrent, when does it happen?

### Sandals and Such in the Lab

It's that time of the year where we all need to remember that sandals and open-toed shoes are NOT permitted in our laboratories, per the university's Chemical Hygiene Plan. The risk of exposure to hazardous materials (not to mention sharps or broken glass) is too great to permit these to be worn. Given the warmer weather, we recommend that you keep a pair of appropriate lab shoes at your desk to change into so that you can wear sandals and open-toed shoes for your non-lab activities.

### **Hazardous Waste Pick-up Schedule**

<b>Mellon Institute</b>	Apr 14,28 May 12,26	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM
<b>Wean and Doherty Halls</b>	Apr 14,28 May 12,26	12:30 PM to 3:30 PM
<b>All other main campus locations</b>	Apr 1, May 13	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM
<b>PTC</b>	Apr 1, May 13	12:30 PM to 3:30 PM
<b>Penn Ave., Robotics Consortium</b>	Apr 29	
<b>Computers</b>	Apr 2 ,6 May 7,11	

To request a waste pick-up or receive waste labels, secondary containment or tags, go to: <http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/chemical/waste/index.html>