

# UNIT SAFETY OFFICER PROGRAM

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

Office of Research  
*Research Integrity and Safety*

### **I. Purpose & Scope**

The following standard operating procedure (SOP) provides direction and guidance for the selection of a Unit Safety Officer (USO) and an outline of the required training and responsibilities for the role. For this SOP, the term “Unit” can be defined as either a department, college, or center; the scope of the term, and thus the scope of the USOs oversight will be determined by each individual entity.

USOs will serve as liaisons between their designated department, college, or center and the Office of Research Safety (ORS) to help ORS ensure that safety and regulatory requirements are being met by laboratory personnel. Opting into the program will be voluntary for units.

### **II. Requirements & Eligibility**

- a. Units are given the option to nominate someone to serve as the USO. They have the flexibility to nominate for an entire department, college, or center, depending upon the complexity and breadth of a particular program.
- b. It is preferable that the USO be a full-time staff member or faculty member within the unit they represent. Students are not eligible for this role. USOs that are staff must be authorized to attend faculty meetings to keep abreast of upcoming faculty hires, departures, and laboratory relocations.
- c. There is no term limit for someone assigned to the role of USO and no backup USO will be necessary.
- d. Each USO will receive endorsement from ORS to perform the responsibilities listed in Section III after completing the following training requirements.
  - i. An initial training will be provided by ORS to all individuals nominated for the role. The training will cover the following:
    - Overview of ORS programs including inspection procedures, fee-for-service, and emergency response procedures
    - Overview of ORS interactions with other groups such as the Environmental Safety Division and the Facilities Management Division
    - Overview of Chematix functionality and the Learning Management System
    - An introduction to the web-forms used by ORS
    - Lab-specific Chemical Safety Plans
    - Respiratory Protection Program
    - Laboratory opening, relocation, and decommissioning procedures including equipment decontamination
  - ii. Each new USO will be required to shadow an ORS inspector on one safety inspection within their unit.
- e. ORS will provide periodic training and announcements to discuss challenges, provide updates on

policy changes, and highlight potential areas for improvement with the program. These trainings and announcements will primarily be given through the Learning Management System.

- f. It is highly encouraged that individuals agreeing to serve in this role be credited or compensated in some way, but specifics for how to do so will be left to the individual units.

### **III. Responsibilities**

- a. USOs will have the following responsibilities:

- i. Work with ORS to coordinate training for faculty, staff, and students working in laboratories within the unit.
- ii. Collect informal feedback from researchers and lab personnel.
- iii. Serve as a conduit for ORS announcements related to lab safety policy changes or updates.
- iv. Relay information to ORS regarding any near-misses or laboratory accidents.
- v. Serve as a liaison for fee-for-service requests.
- vi. Notify ORS of any upcoming laboratory openings, closings, relocations, or renovations.
- vii. Attend faculty meetings and serve on the unit's safety committee if one exists.
- viii. Receive lab safety summaries for all laboratories in the unit. These summaries will be provided by ORS and will cover common findings, highlighting problematic laboratories.
- ix. Stay up to date on training for hazardous waste management and right-to-know training.
- x. Maintain contact information for ORS, the Environmental Safety Division, and the Facilities Management Division.

- b. USO responsibilities will NOT include the following:

- i. Scheduling or performing any sort of laboratory safety assessment
- ii. Documenting safety related concerns or problems; this will be done by ORS after being notified by the USO
- iii. Cleaning any laboratory space
- iv. Taking corrective actions on behalf of laboratories within the unit. This responsibility will still rest with the PI and lab personnel of each individual lab
- v. Serving in any sort of on-call capacity; this role will only function during normal business hours

### **IV. Making Changes**

If a unit would like to change the USO they have nominated or if a USO decides to step down from the role, they must notify ORS by contacting the Senior Safety & Compliance Office for Chemical Safety. Contact information is provided below:

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