Laboratory Housekeeping

Version: July 2020

Research Safety
Office of Research
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

I. Purpose & Scope

Lack of proper organization and cleanliness in a workspace is one of the major contributing factors in most occupational incidents and injuries. The unique mixture of chemicals and equipment present in a laboratory can exacerbate the already hazardous conditions that disorder creates. Additionally, from a security standpoint, it is more difficult to notice when items are missing or out of place if a laboratory is disorganized and cluttered. This document is meant to provide an overview of the University's requirements and recommendations for housekeeping and cleanliness within research, instructional, and clinical labs.

II. Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of each lab worker to ensure that their workspace is kept clean and orderly. The following general guidelines should be followed and can be added to at the discretion of the Principal Investigator (PI) or lab supervisor.

    - Ensure that all samples, reagents, and working solutions are properly labeled and placed in a safe location when work is completed.
    - Ensure that all sharps, glass, pipette tips, biohazardous waste, and EPA regulated hazardous waste have been placed into their appropriate waste receptacles. There should be no open waste containers and no stray needles or pipette tips left on the work bench or floor when work is completed.
    - Any spills should be wiped clean as soon as feasibly possible after being noticed. If a spill creates a hazardous environment and/or the laboratory staff do not feel comfortable cleaning up the spill, please contact the Office of Research Safety during business hours (M-F, 8AM-5PM) or Campus Police (911) after business hours.
    - Similarly, measures should be taken to control and clean stains on work surfaces. Often, stains get left behind on lab benches or inside fume hoods and are later difficult to identify; this becomes especially problematic when new users move into a space or a lab gets remodeled. It is imperative that stains and spills be handled immediately by lab users that are familiar with the processes and reagents being used.
    - Any tools, cords, wires, and other materials should be removed from high

traffic areas where they could become slip, trip, and fall hazards.
    - At no point should exits and primary egress aisles be blocked or obstructed in any way.
    - Any deficiencies related to the University's facilities (e.g., faulty wiring, HVAC concerns, or leaky sinks and pipes) should be reported immediately to facilities via a work request (see details below).

- For shared areas, the same general recommendations apply. For these areas, it may be necessary to institute a cleaning schedule or checklist and assign lab or department members to particular days or hours to ensure that these general guidelines are being followed by all users of the space.

- Although it is the responsibility of each individual lab user to ensure that their areas are kept clean and orderly, the ultimate responsibility for overseeing the safety and compliance of a given laboratory is the PI. The PI will be notified during annual lab safety inspections about any clutter or disorder in the lab that the Office of Research Safety (ORS) deems serious enough to pose a health and safety risk. PIs and lab managers should promote good laboratory housekeeping for all of the areas they oversee.

III. Work Requests

On occasion, it may be necessary to submit a facilities work request to correct items such as faulty electrical wiring or leaky sinks and pipes. These issues will usually be noticed during the annual lab safety inspections and in those cases, ORS will submit a work order to have it corrected at no cost to the lab. If the lab notices an issue on their own, please reach out to ORS for assistance with getting a work order submitted.

IV. Contacts

Environmental Safety Division: 706-542-5801
Office of Research Safety: 706-542-5288
UGA Work Request Center: 706-542-7456

V. References

Prudent Practices in the Laboratory: Handling and Management of Chemical Hazards, National Research Council, 2011

University of California – Center for Laboratory Safety