Laboratory Security Tips for Hazardous Materials Users

SafetyNet #: 118

As a result of terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the release of anthrax into the United States Postal System, intense concerns have been raised about the safety and security of research laboratories using hazardous (radiological, chemical and biological) materials.

Principal Investigators (PI) should develop a written security plan for laboratory areas under their control, where hazardous materials are used and stored. The security plan, whether developed as a stand-alone document or incorporated into the laboratory's existing Chemical Hygiene Plan, should include protocols for reporting incidents such as undocumented visitors, unusual or threatening phone calls, and missing hazardous materials. Due to regulatory complexities, PIs working with Select Agents or Toxins or those who are working in BSL-3 laboratories should contact EH&S when developing their security plans.

Annual training of all laboratory personnel on this, and all other safety plans, is required under Cal/OSHA and provides one of the best ways to increase laboratory security.

Other recommendations for increasing lab security include:

- **Control access to areas where hazardous materials are used and stored.** Laboratory and animal-care areas should be locked at all times. Limit access by visitors, maintenance workers, repair personnel and others requiring one-time or occasional entry. Access for lab personnel such as students, visiting scientists and those performing custodial maintenance or repairs should be limited to hours when regular employees are present.

- **Lock unattended storage areas.** Freezers, refrigerators, cabinets and other containers that house biological agents, hazardous chemicals, or radioactive materials should be securely locked any time the storage area is not in direct view of workers.

- **Know the identity of people entering your laboratory.** Environmental Health & Safety personnel, Facilities Management, Animal Care workers and other campus personnel should be wearing visible identification badges.

- **Know what materials are being brought into the laboratory area.** All packages...
should be visually searched by laboratory personnel before being brought into the lab. Packages containing specimens, bacterial or viral isolates, or biological or chemical toxins should be opened in a biological safety cabinet, chemical fume hood, or other appropriate containment device.

- **Know what materials are being removed from the laboratory.** When shipping hazardous materials, be sure packaging and paperwork conform to all applicable campus, local, state, federal and international regulations and shipping requirements. Biological materials or toxins that will be hand-carried on common carriers must comply with all applicable regulations and permits. Contact EH&S (530-752-1493) for assistance. In addition, all hazardous waste must be disposed of in accordance with campus, local, state and federal regulations.

**Contact**

**Research Safety**  
researchsafety@ucdavis.edu 530-752-1493  
FAX: 530-752-4527

**More information**  

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**Source URL (modified on 01/08/19 10:53am):** https://safetyservices.ucdavis.edu/safetynet/laboratory-security-tips-hazardous-materials-users

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