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Laboratory Safety

As we all know laboratory research and testing is important. Here at LaRC we develop new and improved products also work in the area of medical and scientific research.

The area of laboratory safety covers several of the topics that have been discussed in previous newsletters this year. The subject of MSDS's, personal protective equipment, hazardous waste, and chemical labeling all are tied together in laboratory safety. When everything is put into action this is what we call our Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP).

Attention to Safety

When working in a laboratory environment not only are you exposed to a wide variety of chemicals, but you face other dangers such as fires, explosions, dangerous reactions, and chemical burns. You have the right to know about the hazards you work with and the ways you can reduce your risk. It is also your right and responsibility to use the information on the chemicals you use on a daily basis.

Your Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP)

The CHP is designed to protect you from the health hazards associated with hazardous chemicals in your lab. The CHP should address the specific work practices and procedures for all work involving hazardous substances in your lab. There are some simple rules to follow that will add up to lab safety. If you use knowledge, caution, and common sense you should eliminate most of your problems in the lab. Here are a few ideas to start with:

* Assume any unfamiliar chemical is hazardous.
* Consider a mixture to be at least as hazardous as its most hazardous component.
*Don't use any unlabeled substance.
*Never combine any substance unless you've been explicitly instructed to do so.
*Follow all chemical safety instructions and procedures to the letter.
*Use common sense, and be cautious around all lab equipment.

Good hygiene and housekeeping is part of lab safety. Chemicals and biological hazards can enter your body, or those of co-workers if you are not careful.

DON'T

DON'T eat, drink, smoke, chew gum, or apply makeup in a lab.
DON'T keep food, or food and drinking containers in the area with chemicals.
DON'T keep food in refrigerators with chemicals.
DON'T drink from lab glassware.
DON'T sniff or taste chemicals.
DON'T use your mouth to pipette chemicals.

DO

Wash thoroughly before leaving the lab.
Always wash before eating, drinking, smoking, or applying makeup.
Remove contaminated clothing immediately, and don't use again unless it has been properly decontaminated.
Follow any special procedures required by your lab.

When working with chemicals always use the proper protective clothing and equipment. This clothing and equipment must be checked before use to assure that it is in good condition.

NOTE:

Many experts believe that contact lenses can trap dangerous vapors or liquids in your eyes. It would be wise to keep regular glasses around for use in the lab.

Treat the lab and it's equipment with respect! The labs we have on site are varied in their use and the amount of equipment is astonishing. Most of this equipment can be hazardous if not handled properly. Glassware, autoclaves, electrical equipment, centrifuges, and compressed gas cylinders are just a few items that we deal with and each of them have their own hazards that should be respected. READ your CHP, LEARN the hazards, TAKE your time, AVOID contact, POST signs, USE protective clothing and equipment, and FOLLOW all equipment operating instructions. Ask your supervisor about your Chemical Hygiene Plan and see if it is current, you the worker is the one who knows what is being done and how.