



Date: April 26, 2006

To: Scientific Directors

From: Deputy Director for Intramural Research

Subject: Laboratory Safety Issues

There is no more important issue to me than the safety of our NIH staff. The NIH Scientific Directors discussed important laboratory safety issues recently, and I am writing now about the following concerns (please also read the attached memoranda of October 23, 1997 and July 17, 2002).

- A. Laboratory Safety Training: I am reinforcing the importance of laboratory safety training. Please take responsibility to confirm that Lab/Branch Chiefs in your IC or their designees document that all laboratory personnel have taken the mandatory laboratory safety training (<<http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/labsafety/>>). Dr. Deborah Wilson, Director, Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS), ORS, assures me that a central database is available for use by supervisors with the assistance of DOHS to document online and classroom training taken by laboratory personnel. In the very near future the database will be linked to the NED enabling supervisors, AOs and PIs to search by IC and organization.
- B. IC Laboratory Safety Committees: I remind you that each IC has a Safety and Health Committee with authority to oversee and monitor that IC's safety operations. Please (1) assure that such a duly-constituted committee exists in your IC and (2) walk through all laboratory and intramural research spaces annually (accompanied by your Safety and Health Committee Chair and a representative from the DOHS) to become familiar with the safety and health issues present in the IC and to direct appropriate corrective actions. A listing of IC Safety Chairpersons and the accident and injury data for each IC from the past year will be coming to you in a separate communication.
- C. Corridor Safety: Mr. J.P. McCabe, NIH Fire Marshal, illustrated the spectrum of compliance with the NIH corridor utilization policy. Some areas are in need of immediate corrective action, and this is your responsibility, working closely with the Division of the Fire Marshal (DFM), to bring corridors at NIH into compliance as quickly as possible. I have asked the DFM to tag items in violation of the corridor policy for removal.

Since this discussion at the April 5 SD meeting, we were reminded again of the importance of safety training, when a shipping container improperly packaged with dry ice burst, causing serious injury to a staff member. Therefore, I am taking this opportunity to remind you that only those lab personnel who are certified shippers are allowed to package such containers.

I recognize that this policy may present challenges, but your participation is essential to increase safety at the NIH.

Michael M. Gottesman, M.D.

Attachments (2)



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Date: July 17, 2002
To: All Principal Investigators
From: Deputy Director for Intramural Research
Subject: Reminder about Importance of Supervising Students in Laboratories

Each summer, hundreds of students come to NIH laboratories for training in biomedical research. It is critical that we take appropriate responsibility for the safety, as well as mentoring, of these students. The following are important principles to follow to assure the safety of our trainees:

1. You must supervise students directly at all times when they are working with any potentially hazardous materials.
2. All students should be appointed under a hiring authority (or properly executed special volunteer agreement) that provides the student with insurance coverage under the Federal Employees Compensation Act and the Federal Tort Claims Act. Personal and professional services agreements are not appropriate mechanisms for students.
3. Parents must sign a consent for minors to work in a laboratory. The consent form must list any potentially hazardous materials the student may encounter or work with.
4. All students must receive safety training courses relevant to the laboratory procedures they will be performing. The NIH Division of Safety (6-3353) offers [laboratory safety training](#).
5. Supervisors must provide and document specific safety training related to the work the student will do. All of us are responsible for giving these young people a safe and scientifically rewarding experience at the NIH. The first step is to set a good example with regard to safety. Laboratory/Branch Chiefs and principal investigators are directly responsible for following these rules and assuring that students are appropriately hired, trained, and supervised.

Michael M. Gottesman, M.D.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
National Cancer Institute
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Date: OCT 23 1997
To: Scientific Directors
From: Deputy Director for Intramural Research
Subject: Establishment of ICD Safety and Health Committees

As many of you may remember, the NIH Occupational Safety and Health Committee (OSHC) prepared a draft charter for use by all ICD Safety and Health Committees. At the recommendation of the SDs, I asked the OSHC to consider, as an alternative, the merit of establishing the safety and health committees on a building by building basis rather than by ICD. Further, the OSHC considered whether the functions of the Safety and Health Committees should be merged with those of the Building Security Committees. The OSHC thoughtfully considered both suggestions. For a variety of cogent reasons, the OSHC has conveyed to me their recommendation that NIH employees and management would be best served by ICD based Safety and Health Committees and that the functions of the Safety and Health Committees should not be merged with those of the Building Security Committees. I have accepted these recommendations. Attached is a copy of the Safety and Health Committee Charter to be implemented in each ICD.

In addition to executing the responsibilities outlined in the Charter, I am asking each Scientific Director to walk through all laboratory and intramural research spaces once during the course of each year accompanied by the ICD Safety and Health Committee Chairperson and a representative from the Division of Safety, ORS. These visits will allow each SD to become familiar with the safety and health issues present in his or her Institute and direct the appropriate corrective actions. The Occupational Safety and Health Branch staff are available to assist in any way they can.

Your participation is essential to our increasing safety awareness across the Intramural Research Program and will serve to reinforce with your staff the necessity of conducting their work in the safest manner possible. As an adjunct to this program, it is time to remind everyone that laboratory safety and health training is mandatory at the NIH. Safety and health training information has been included in the Fellows Handbook and participation in these courses is required of all participants in the postdoctoral training programs at the NIH. Call 6-3353 for a listing of courses and the schedules.

Setting an appropriate example is the best way to train young scientists to conduct their work in the safest manner possible. I challenge each of you to encourage NIH senior scientific staff to set a good example by learning about and following safety rules and requiring individuals working in their laboratories to follow them also.

Michael M. Gottesman, M.D.

Attachment

cc: Dr. Robert McKinney
Dr. Frederick Miles
Dr. Deborah Wilson