Don't Let This Happen to YOU!

Cluttered Eyewash

Wrong Material and Unmonitored Autoclave
Management of Common Rooms and Shared Equipment

Throughout campus there are numerous shared facilities such as cold rooms; autoclave and glass wash facilities, storage areas and equipment rooms. These areas can provide needed space and convenience or become a housekeeping nightmare. Users of common areas and equipment should develop procedures to ensure that common areas are properly maintained. A rotating schedule can be established so that all users who benefit from the use of the space share responsibility for its upkeep. These chores may include running spore strips through an autoclave, checking temperatures and changing the temperature charts on cold room monitors or defrosting freezers. At a minimum, each user must clean up their experiment or remove their cleaned or sterilized equipment to make room for the next user.

As a courtesy to others, all materials brought into a common room should be labeled correctly and stored so as not to create a hazard. Equipment brought in on a temporary basis should be prominently marked with the owner’s name (and possibly a contact number) so that if an emergency arises, the responsible party can be notified. Labeling will also ensure that hot plates, centrifuges and other apparatus find their way home once an experiment is complete.

Temperatures of freezers and cold rooms must be monitored daily. Any temperature problems should be addressed immediately. This prevents loss of perishable reagents and specimens as well as avoiding messy cleanups if items spoil.

Those using common areas must clean up after each use of the facility and make sure that at the completion of their experiment, all waste is properly disposed of. If an experiment must run unsupervised for an extended period of time, detailed emergency procedures should be posted, so that anyone responding to the situation can at a minimum contact the owner of the experiment and prevent damage to the facility and injury to personnel. Even relatively simple procedures such as centrifugation can get out of hand if a rotor fails.

All those using common equipment must be familiar with emergency shutdown procedures, location of power switches, fire extinguishers, safety showers and eyewashes. PI’s should orient new employees and students about potential hazards before assigning them to use shared facilities. If a particularly hazardous or sensitive experiment will be run, the PI may want to post a notice or arrange a meeting with all users so that people, equipment and valuable research are protected.

Summary:

1. Share responsibility for equipment
2. Label all materials
3. Monitor temperatures daily
4. Clean areas after work is complete
5. Post emergency procedures
6. Notify others of particular hazards or equipment
7. Familiarize yourself with:
a. Fire extinguishers  
b. Safety showers  
c. Eye washes  
d. Power switches  
e. Emergency shut down procedures