EHS Newsletter

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Good Housekeeping Promotes Laboratory Safety

A clean, organized laboratory helps prevent incidents and reduces the risk of exposure to hazardous materials. All laboratory personnel, including the Principal Investigator (PI), share responsibility for maintaining a clean, orderly, and safe work environment. PIs and lab managers are responsible for establishing housekeeping expectations, including proper storage of chemicals and hazardous waste.

Follow these practices to keep your laboratory safe:

- **Keep the aisleways clear.** Keep hallways and walkways free of obstructions and trip hazards. Maintain at least a 36-inch clear path in laboratory aisles, or a wider path where required for emergency egress.
- **Maintain sprinkler clearance.** Keep stored materials at least 18 inches below sprinkler heads, including materials on upper shelves.
- **Keep emergency equipment accessible.** Do not block emergency showers, eyewash stations, fire extinguishers, or electrical panels.
- **Reduce clutter and combustible materials.** Keep work areas neat and promptly remove and recycle empty cardboard boxes.
- **Keep fume hood baffles clear.** Blocking the rear baffles can disrupt airflow and allow hazardous vapors to escape into a lab worker's breathing zone. Do not use fume hoods for storage of chemicals or other items.
- **Use furniture that can be cleaned.** Do not use cloth-covered chairs in laboratories, as fabric is difficult to decontaminate following contamination from hazardous materials.
- **Secure compressed gas cylinders.** Properly secure all cylinders.
- **Label chemical containers.** Label all secondary chemical containers with the full chemical name. Do not use acronyms or abbreviations.
- **Keep chemical containers closed.** Cap containers when not in use to prevent spills, evaporation, and exposure.
- **Manage hazardous waste properly.** Store hazardous waste in the lab's designated satellite accumulation area. Use the UML hazardous waste label and place all liquid hazardous waste in secondary containment.
- **Store materials safely.** Place heavier items on lower shelves, and do not store hazardous liquids above eye level.
- **Use a stepladder for overhead storage.** Never stand on chairs, benches, or countertops to reach stored items.

Proper Storage and Handling of Lamps

Maryam Babaei, EHS Lab Safety Specialist

Fluorescent lamps and other types of lamps, whether used or new, may contain hazardous materials such as mercury. LED lamps, although mercury-free, may contain small amounts of lead, arsenic, copper, and other metals.

Over the past year, EHS has observed on at least four occasions that fluorescent lamps, containing mercury, were left in laboratories and hallways without protective packaging or appropriate storage containers.

If a fluorescent lamp breaks, it may release a small amount of mercury vapor and powder from the lamp's internal coating. Avoid the area, notify Facilities or EHS, and do not vacuum or sweep the debris. The area should be ventilated and cleaned by trained personnel using appropriate procedures. Although a single broken lamp is unlikely to cause significant health effects, repeated or prolonged exposure to mercury vapor should be avoided.

Improperly stored lamps can easily break, creating risks of cuts from broken glass and potential exposure to hazardous materials. Lamps left in hallways may also create housekeeping and safety hazards for building occupants.

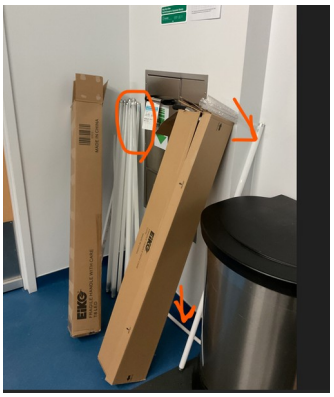
EHS has provided training for Facilities personnel and has brought this issue to their attention. However, safety is everyone's responsibility. If you observe fluorescent lamps or any other type of lamp abandoned or improperly stored in your workplace, please help secure them to prevent breakage and notify EHS or Facilities immediately, so they can be handled, stored, and disposed of properly.

*The Office of Sustainability manages the collection and responsible disposal of non-Broken lightbulbs as **Universal Waste** through approved vendors. All lightbulbs must be placed in designated universal waste drums. If collection is needed from an established accumulation point, please submit a service request to arrange pickup.*

Use the link below for more information about universal waste policies and procedures in UMass Lowell, and universal waste locations around the campus:

Universal Waste Policies & Procedures | Life Safety Policies & Procedures | Life Safety and Emergency Management | UMass Lowell

Please note: Fluorescent tubes must be completely contained in original packaging for compliance with lightbulb transportation requirements.





US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) promulgated the final rule (40 CFR 273) for **"Universal Waste"** that established streamlined collection and management requirements for universal waste batteries, pesticides, mercury-containing thermostats, mercury-containing fluorescent lamps, and other mercury-containing equipment such as thermometers, barometers, sphygmomanometers, and light switches.

Thank you for helping maintain a safe campus environment.

Before Winter Break: A Short Safety Checklist for Labs and Offices

Kathi Lamond, EHS Laboratory Safety Manager

☐ **Confirm coverage.** Identify who will check on ongoing experiments or essential equipment and who to contact if there's a problem.

☐ **Shut down equipment that can safely be turned off.** Check with your team before powering down shared equipment.

☐ **Secure lab materials.** Close and label chemical and hazardous waste containers. Return chemicals and hazardous waste to their designated storage areas.

☐ **Clear exits and walkways.** Put away supplies and remove boxes, cords, and other trip hazards.

☐ **Know how to report a building issue.** For urgent issues such as a water leak or loss of heat, call the Facilities Management Service Center at **978-934-2601**. The center is staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For urgent issues after hours, call the same number and select the option for UML Police Dispatch. For non-urgent repairs, use the Service Request Form on the Facilities Management website.

Training and Reminders

New! Lead Hazards Training

Before handling lead shielding or lead bricks in labs that work with radioactive materials, complete the Lead Hazards Training and review the UMass Lowell SOP for handling lead. Document your lab-specific training in Section 8 of your Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) Notebook.

Transition to Lead-Free Soldering

UMass Lowell has transitioned to lead-free soldering in most labs. If your lab uses lead-containing solder, please contact Maryam Babaei, EHS Lab Safety Specialist, to arrange a risk assessment.

Winter Break Fume Hood Shutdown

The winter fume hood shutdown will run from December 22nd through January 5th. During this period, fume hoods that are not used over winter break will be shut down, primarily in teaching labs. EHS will post a shutdown notice on the door of each affected lab.

EHS Resources

www.uml.edu/eem/ehs | EHS@uml.edu