

University of Arkansas

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

Laboratory Security

Laboratories often contain an array of hazardous substances, from chemicals and biological agents to radioactive materials and controlled substances. Laboratory personnel are trained to deal with these hazards. However, it is important to ensure that the general public is not exposed to these dangers and that materials are not removed from the laboratory.

In the wake of the terrorist activities of 2001, there has been an increased awareness of the need for heightened security measures. Safeguarding University resources from unauthorized access, misuse, or removal is the responsibility of all faculty and staff. Principal Investigators are obligated to safeguard their laboratories, however all laboratory personnel have a duty to take reasonable precautions against unauthorized entry, and the theft or misuse of materials, especially those that could threaten the public.

Principal Investigators should review and assess the security of their highly hazardous materials, such as infectious agents, toxins, radioactive materials, acutely toxic chemicals, carcinogens, teratogens, explosive and reactive chemicals, and compressed gasses.

At a minimum, the following precautions should be employed:

1. Question the presence of unfamiliar individuals in laboratories and report all suspicious activity immediately to UAPD by calling 575-2222.
2. Lock all laboratory doors when personnel are not in attendance, even for a few minutes.
3. Avoid providing building access to unfamiliar individuals.
4. Secure exterior doors after entering/exiting the building.

Research and other activities involving the use of lab space, materials, or equipment without the knowledge and approval of the responsible Principal Investigator is strictly prohibited.

The following guidelines were adapted from Appendix F of the CDC/NIH publication *Biosafety in Microbiology and Biomedical Laboratories* 4th edition. These guidelines are intended to reduce the risk of unauthorized removal of hazardous materials from the laboratory:

- 1. Recognize that laboratory security is different from laboratory safety and develop a site-specific security policy.**
 - a. Assess the laboratory for hazardous materials and particular security risks.
 - b. Develop and implement lab security procedures for lab personnel.

- c. Train lab personnel on security procedures and assign responsibilities.
- 2. Control access to areas where hazardous materials are used and stored.**
 - a. Close and lock laboratory doors when no one is present.
 - b. Do NOT leave hazardous materials unattended or unsecured at any time.
 - c. Lock freezers, refrigerators, storage cabinets, and other equipment where biological agents, hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials or controlled substances are stored when they are not in use.
- 3. Know who is in the laboratory.**
 - a. Consider using a logbook for staff to sign in and out of the lab each day or using carded access devices for this purpose.
 - b. Limit laboratory access to those individuals who need to be in the lab.
 - c. Restrict off-hours access to individuals authorized by the principal investigator.
 - d. All lab workers (including students, visiting scientists, and other short-term workers) should carry University identification cards.
 - e. Guests should be issued identification badges and be cleared for entry using the same procedures as regular workers or escorted.
- 4. Know what materials are being brought into the laboratory.**
 - a. Know what hazardous materials are ordered and shipped to your lab.
 - b. Dispose of unneeded hazardous materials.
 - c. Use a log to sign highly hazardous materials in and out of secure storage.
 - d. Take periodic inventory of all highly hazardous chemicals, biological agents/toxins, radioactive materials, and controlled substances.
- 5. Know what materials are removed from the laboratory.**
 - a. Track the use and disposal of hazardous materials.
 - b. Require written permission prior to removal of highly hazardous materials from the laboratory.
 - c. Report any missing inventory to the UA Police (575-2222).
- 6. Have an emergency plan.**
 - a. Recognize that controlling access can make emergency response more difficult.
 - b. Evaluate emergency plans with administrators, safety and security officials, and, if necessary, outside experts.
 - c. Review emergency plans with lab personnel.
 - d. Provide emergency responders with information regarding serious laboratory hazards.
- 7. Have a protocol for reporting incidents.**
 - a. Principal investigators, in cooperation with facility safety and security officials, should have policies and procedures in place for the reporting and investigation of incidents or possible incidents, such as undocumented visitors, missing hazardous materials, or unusual or threatening phone calls.
 - b. Train laboratory personnel on procedures.

For more information, contact the Office of Environmental Health & Safety at 575-5448