Food in Laboratories

Responsible Executive: Vice Chancellor for Research

Responsible Office: Policy Coordination and Implementation Monitoring:
Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S)

ehs@berkeley.edu
642-3073

Policy Implementation:
All campus units with laboratories containing hazards.

Contact: EH&S Associate Director for Health & Safety

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Policy Statement

Storage or consumption of food and beverages is prohibited in laboratories and other rooms that use or store hazardous chemicals, biological hazards, unsealed radioactive materials, research animals, and/or human blood or tissues. Exceptions to this policy are allowed only in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

Who Is Affected by This Policy

- All faculty, staff, students, contractors, and visitors to campus laboratories are expected to comply with this policy.

Who Administers This Policy

- EH&S staff oversee the development, coordination, and communication of this policy. They also periodically monitor and report on the effectiveness of its implementation in campus units.
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Why We Have This Policy

Laboratories that contain hazardous chemicals, biological hazards, unsealed radioactive materials, research animals, and/or human blood or tissues require special work practices to prevent unintentional ingestion of hazardous agents. Such laboratories are generally not appropriate facilities in which to eat or drink, and students and other researchers need to adopt safe laboratory practices by eating or drinking outside of laboratory areas, and only after washing their hands.

Restrictions on storing or consuming food or beverages in laboratories are strongly encouraged in publicized research manuals (e.g., National Research Council’s “Prudent Practices in the Laboratory”), and enforced by governmental regulatory agencies including the California Department of Public Health Radiologic Health Branch (CDPH-RHB) and the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA).

Responsibilities

Department Chairs and Organized Research Unit (ORU) Directors:
- Ensure the effective communication and implementation of this policy throughout their units.
- Ensure that their unit’s faculty and staff routinely monitor ongoing implementation of this policy. Department Safety Coordinators (DSCs) can assist in communication and regular monitoring of implementation.

Principal Investigators (PIs):
- Ensure the effective communication and implementation of this policy throughout their laboratory facilities.
- Routinely monitor laboratory practices.
- Provide mentoring and coaching where needed to reinforce safe practices.

Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S):
- Periodically monitors the implementation of this policy across campus and reports deficiencies to PIs and other line managers as appropriate.
- Notifies the appropriate research oversight committee(s) of deficiencies that are not corrected in a timely manner.
- Provides guidance on establishing safe and demarcated “clean areas” within laboratory rooms, and reviews the safety of designated clean areas during laboratory inspections.

Facilities Services:
- Where feasible, designs and constructs laboratory facilities that include sufficient break rooms for researchers to wash their hands and safely store and consume food and beverages. The same design criterion applies to major renovations of existing laboratory buildings.
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Procedures

Food and beverages are not allowed to be stored or consumed in laboratories or other rooms that use or store hazardous chemicals, biological hazards, unsealed radioactive materials, research animals, and/or human blood or tissues.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy are allowed only in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

Where consistent with building, departmental, or other local rules, PIs may allow food or beverages in their laboratories, but only in designated “clean areas,” and only on the condition that no hazardous agents are allowed within the designated clean area at any time.

Each clean area must be clearly demarcated around its perimeter with blue adhesive-backed tape at least one-half inch wide, and affixed with at least one adhesive-backed sign (available from EH&S) reading as follows:

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NOTICE
CLEAN AREA
FOOD OR BEVERAGES ALLOWED ONLY IN THIS AREA

PROHIBITED IN THIS AREA:
- Hazardous Chemicals
- Biological Hazards
- Human Blood or Tissues
- Research Animals

- Radioactive Materials not permitted within one meter of this area

WASH UP
Ensure you are not contaminated before eating or drinking.
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In those laboratories where the PI elects to allow storage or consumption of food or beverages as described above, the PI is responsible for training on, and enforcement of, these requirements.

Additional Restrictions for Rooms Containing Radioactive Materials
The designation of a clean area within a room containing unsealed radioactive materials is strongly discouraged; the establishment of any designated clean area within such a room requires the formal written approval of the chair of the campus Radiation Safety Committee (RSC).
When designated clean areas must be located in the same room as unsealed radioactive materials, the clean areas must be located as far as feasible, but no less than one meter, from the “restricted area” where radioactive material is used or stored. If the designated clean area must be contiguous with the “restricted area” (such as on the same bench top), a substantial barrier must be obtained by the PI and placed to separate the radioactive material from the designated clean area. Design details are available by contacting the EH&S Radiation Safety Team.

**Equipment for Food Preparation and Storage**
Appliances used to store or prepare food, including refrigerators and microwave ovens, must be clearly labeled “Food Only – No Hazardous Materials.”

Laboratory equipment, including glassware and hot plates, is never to be used to prepare or store food or beverages.

**Monitoring and Enforcement**
Compliance with this policy is to be monitored on a routine basis by PIs and other research group supervisors, and on a periodic basis by EH&S and other research compliance units during laboratory visits and inspections.

When deficiencies are communicated to the PI but are not corrected in a timely manner, enforcement of this policy can result in suspension or revocation of research authorizations, such as Biological Use Authorizations (BUA’s) and/or Radiation Use Authorizations (RUA’s). Uncorrected deficiencies will also be reported by EH&S to the appropriate dean for action through line management.

**Web Site Address for This Policy**

[http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/policies/foodinlabs.pdf](http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/policies/foodinlabs.pdf)

**Glossary**

**Biological Hazards:** microbial agents capable of causing disease in humans or animals, and biological materials (such as human blood, body fluids, or tissues) that may be contaminated with these microbial agents.

**Clean Area:** A designated and demarcated area within a laboratory where hazards are prohibited at all times, and where food and beverages are allowed with the PI’s approval.

**Consumption:** Eating or drinking food or beverages. For purposes of this policy, the term also covers the application of cosmetics and chewing gum, which present similar hand-to-mouth hazards.
Hazardous Chemicals: Chemicals that present one or more hazards (e.g., flammable, corrosive, mutagenic, reactive, toxic, etc.). Hazardous chemicals also include toxins created by organisms. These chemicals all must be reported on the laboratory’s chemical inventory.

Human Blood or Tissues: Human blood and other human body fluids, and unpreserved human tissues and organs that may potentially harbor disease-causing microbial agents.

Laboratory: Any room or set of rooms in which research is conducted involving hazardous substances, organisms, or operations. For purposes of this policy, the term “laboratory” also includes related facilities such as media preparation rooms and wash rooms.

Radiation Safety Committee: The campus research oversight committee that reviews and approves all uses of ionizing radiation and radioisotopes, and establishes campus policy on ionizing radiation safety.

Research Animals: Live vertebrate animals used or intended for use in research, research training, experimentation, biological testing, or related purposes.

Restricted Area: A designated and demarcated area in which radioactive materials are used and stored.

Unsealed Radioactive Materials: Radioactive materials not manufactured and used in accordance with a Safety Evaluation of the Device, published in the Registry of Radioactive Sealed Sources and Devices, by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission or an Agreement State.

Related Documents

California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5191, “Occupational Exposure to Hazardous Chemicals in Laboratories,” Appendix B.

California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5193, “Bloodborne Pathogens.”


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