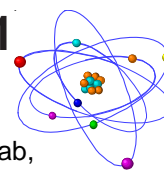


LABORATORY SAFETY FACT SHEET #31



HOUSEKEEPING AND CLUTTER IN THE LABORATORY



Fire, property loss, and injury can result from excessive clutter and poor housekeeping. Good housekeeping can also facilitate good relations within the lab, improve lab technique and make the lab a place you're proud to bring visitors into. The route to a safer, clutter-free lab is to make it a group effort. All lab members should make it part of their daily routine. Below are a few simple steps that can be included in your daily work practices.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR LAB:

1. Chemicals

- **Keep chemicals stored in the appropriate cabinets or designated storage rooms when not in use (NOT IN FUME HOODS).** Only obtain an amount to keep your test or research going, like a one day/week supply. This will free up lab bench space and, if you do have a spill it will minimize the amount of chemical released.
- Put away all reagents, samples, and personal materials.
- **Keep the lids on chemical containers.** This sounds obvious but it will effectively reduce the possibility of a spill and reduce any fumes released into your lab and it's the law.
- **Label all containers.** Make sure there are no unidentified containers; reagents, samples, drying papers with sample, or crucibles/boats with samples. Label all material by chemical name (Not just initials)



2. Cleaning Your Lab

- Properly dispose of old or unwanted chemicals or any unnecessary items.
- Damp wipe all benchtops until clean and in particular areas near weighing stations. Place absorbent paper near weighing stations or any where else necessary.
- Clean up inside fume hoods.
- Look inside all cabinets for leftover waste and any storage hazards.
- Dispose broken glass trash and "sharps" bins into dumpster outside the building.
- Recycle paper and cardboard properly where it will be promptly removed.
- Unused or spare equipment should be stored in a designated storage room/area.
- Equipment or furniture should not block walkways, electrical panels, or emergency eyewash or showers.
- Check emergency egress path is maintained (minimum exit pathway in rooms is 28 inches)
- Don't move your housekeeping problem into the hallway or some other undesirable/illegal location.



3. How cluttered are your lab benches and hoods?

- **Keep lab benches and hoods uncluttered as much as possible.** This may seem impossible when conducting complicated tests or have numerous test samples, but continually remind yourself to keep things organized.
- **Keep containers and equipment away from the edge of benches.** Are you reaching over bottles, cultures, etc. to get to something? Chances are you're about to knock something on the floor.
- What about the shelves above your desk or lab bench? **Keep shelving as orderly as possible.** Be realistic about how much equipment and supplies one needs to store long term.

4. Other

- Implement a group clean-up session weekly, monthly, etc. Verify the lab(s) are clean, organized and anything else required to make the lab look professional.
- Check for trip and slip hazards (e.g. oil leaks from pumps, electrical cords or hoses across walking path)

