

GUIDE TO LABORATORY SAFE PRACTICES FOOD HANDLING AND STORAGE

Responsibility

Principal Investigators are responsible for ensuring that all laboratory personnel are trained in laboratory safe work practices with regards to food handling and storage.

Training

Principal Investigators are also responsible for ensuring that new laboratory personnel have received training on safe work practices regarding food handling and storage.

Personal Protection and Safety

Laboratory workers may be exposed to hazardous biological materials, radioactive materials, or chemicals through consumption of potentially contaminated food, drink, or tobacco products. To protect against this, laboratories that use or store hazardous materials should adhere to the following safe practices:

- Do not prepare, store, or consume food or beverages in the laboratory.
- Do not smoke, consume, or store tobacco products in the laboratory.
- Do not store or use food preparation and storage equipment (such as microwaves, refrigerators, and coffee makers) in the laboratory.
- Ensure that break areas are clearly marked and separated from laboratory operations.
- Doors that separate break areas from adjacent laboratory areas should remain closed except to enter and exit.
- Glassware and utensils used for laboratory operations should not be used to contain or prepare food or beverages.
- Wash hands and arms thoroughly when leaving the laboratory area even if gloves and a lab coat have been worn.
- Do not wear or bring lab coats, gloves or other lab items into break areas or other areas where food is consumed, prepared, or stored.

These practices are designed to help ensure safety for the laboratory workers and compliance with regulations and policies governing laboratory use of chemicals, biological materials, and radioactive materials. Compliance inspectors may cite labs for violations of these regulations and policies if food, drink, or tobacco products or containers are observed in laboratory areas, including desks and trash containers.

Resources, Regulatory Guidelines, and References

- [Vanderbilt University Chemical Hygiene Plan](#)
- [OSHA Toxic and Hazardous Substances 1910.1450 Appendix A - National Research Council Recommendations Concerning Chemical Hygiene in Laboratories](#)
- [OSHA Laboratory Safety Guidance](#)
- [CDC/NIH Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories \(BMBL\) 5th Edition](#)
- [Prudent Practices in the Laboratory: Handling & Disposal of Chemicals \(revised 2011\)](#)
- [ACS Safety in Academic Chemistry Laboratories: Volume 2](#)

Contact EHS at ehs@vanderbilt.edu concerning issues or questions