

# Security of Hazardous Materials

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## Introduction

In addition to preventing the loss of valuable research and expensive equipment, laboratories need to take specific actions in order to provide security against theft of highly hazardous materials, and to insure compliance with new regulations. EH&S urges each unit (department, research group) to review and develop procedures to insure the security of all hazardous materials in their area of responsibility and their labs in general.

Many laboratories already implement various means of security, including locking up controlled substances, syringes and needles, and radioactive materials. EH&S asks you to review and assess the hazardous materials in your laboratory and consider security issues. The intent is to minimize the risk of theft, especially targeting the five-minute window when the lab is left unattended. **One easy way to increase security is to make sure that your laboratory door is locked whenever the lab is left unattended, even for a few minutes.** You may wish to implement some of the following suggestions.

## Security Guidelines

Follow these guidelines to minimize opportunities for intentional removal of any hazardous materials from your laboratory:

- 1) Recognize that laboratory security is related to but different from laboratory safety. Security is preventing intrusion into the laboratory and the theft of equipment or materials from the lab.
- 2) Develop a site-specific security policy.
  - a) Make an assessment of your laboratory area for hazardous materials and particular security issues.
  - b) Develop and implement lab security procedures for your lab group.
  - c) Train lab group members on security procedures and assign responsibilities.
- 3) Control access to areas where hazardous chemicals are used and stored.
  - a) Limit laboratory access to only those individuals who need to be in the lab.
  - b) Restrict off-hours access to individuals authorized by the principal investigator.
  - c) Lock freezers, refrigerators, storage cabinets, and other containers where stocks of biological agents, hazardous chemicals, or radioactive materials

are stored when they are not in direct view of workers (for example, when located in unattended storage areas).

- d) Do not leave hazardous materials unattended or unsecured at any time.
  - e) **Close and lock laboratory doors when no one is present.**
- 4) Know who is in the laboratory area.
- a) Know who is in the lab area at any given time.
  - b) Approach any people you do not recognize who appear to be wandering in laboratory areas and ask if you can direct them.
- 5) Secure your highly hazardous materials.
- a) Use a log to sign highly hazardous materials in and out of secure storage.
  - b) Take a periodic inventory of all highly hazardous chemicals, biological agents/toxins, radioactive materials, and controlled substances. **This could be as simple as frequently looking at your chemical containers to be sure that none are missing.**
  - c) Track the use and disposal of hazardous materials. Report any missing inventory to EH&S (9-2553) and University Police (9-2311).
  - d) Know what materials are being ordered and being brought into the laboratory area.
- 6) Visually screen packages before bringing them to the lab. Packages containing potentially infectious materials should be opened in a biological safety cabinet or other appropriate containment device.
- a) Know what materials are being removed from the laboratory area.
- 7) Have an emergency plan.
- a) Control of access to laboratory areas can make an emergency response more challenging. This must be considered when emergency plans are developed.
  - b) Have a protocol for reporting incidents. Laboratory directors, 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 chemicals, or unusual or threatening phone calls.
  - c) Review and update if necessary the lab's emergency contact information on your door sign, located on or near your laboratory door.
- 8) Chemicals of concern: classes of particularly hazardous chemicals
- a) Laboratory researchers should be aware of the highly hazardous materials they have. Contact EH&S (9-2553) or the Physical and Biological Sciences

Safety Officer (9-5182) for assistance in identifying highly hazardous materials.

- b) For lists of biological diseases and chemical agents go to the CDC website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/Agent/Agentlist.asp>

**Summary: Look out for these important areas of concern:**

- Open labs - especially during off hours
- Unrestricted access to toxic chemicals
- Unlocked support rooms
- Toxic gas security
- Biological materials not secured
- Access to controlled substances
- Changes in chemical inventory
- Storeroom security
- Chemical waste collection areas
- Unusual activities or suspicious persons

**Additional information:**

- Call EH&S for assistance (9-2553) and/or visit the EH&S web page for additional information (<http://ehs.ucsc.edu> bookmark it)
- Review laboratory product catalogs for information about various locks, lock boxes, and other security devices for chemical storage in laboratories.
- Consult with the Campus Police (9-2231).
- Consult with the Safety Officer in Physical and Biological Sciences about security devices (9-5182).