



Laboratory Safety Committee Meeting

Minutes of Thursday, June 23, 2011

10:30 – 12:00 PM, SSB 4220

Present: J. Dickey, K. Galil, R. Maslen, A.M. McCusker, J. Millar, S. Mittler, J. O'Brien, S. Salisbury, R. Sharma, J. Sparks, J. Stanley

Regrets: Y. Huang, J. Whitty

Recorder: S. Xhiku

1.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion to Approve: J. Dickey

Seconded by: J. Sparks

Agenda Approved.

2.0 Approval of February 25th 2011 Minutes

Motion to Approve: S. Salisbury

Seconded by: R. Maslen

Minutes Approved.

3.0 Terms of Reference

A representative from the Postdoctoral Association has been added to the Lab Safety Committee as a non-voting member. "Renewable" was added to the three year term for faculty members. These terms of reference have been approved by UHSC in May.

4.0 Membership Changes

Two new members have joined the Lab Safety Committee. Rahul Sharma is the representative for the Society of Graduate Students and Jamie Whitty is replacing G. Qubty as the new representative for Physical Plant.

5.0 Business Arising

5.1 Lab Safety Manual

5.1.1 Compliance Enforcement

The Compliance Enforcement Policy has been modified to reflect the changes to the Lab Safety Program. There will now be four different levels of compliance to indicate the severity of the violations.

The Committee suggested introducing a legend to give significance to the different levels of compliance. The motion was unanimously approved.

5.2 Lab Safety Inspections

5.2.1 Inspections 2011

A.M. McCusker discussed the compliance graph for 2011. Out of 213 inspections 125 were identified as non-compliance. Some of the more prominent non-compliance issues are chemical storage and labeling. The committee discussed how to increase compliance in labs and how to foster a culture of safety in the university laboratories.

The Committee noted that programs with external review agencies adhere to the expected safety requirements. The Committee suggested implementing a peer-to-peer program, where faculty inspect their colleagues' labs. A.M. McCusker informed the committee that this initiative had already started in Chemistry and that she would contact the department to get feedback for the peer-to-peer program. Another suggestion that the Committee brought forth was the installation of a reporting system for the students working in the lab to the Principal Investigator. Another option to be explored is having the researcher appoint a student to be the safety person in the lab. This student will then report back to the Principal Investigator and take responsibility about maintaining compliance in the lab. The Committee suggested creating an official University sponsored role for this position so that the student may then add it to their Résumé. The Committee speculated that the creation of an official laboratory safety position would motivate students to take the lead in ensuring a safe environment in their labs. Although not a preferred option, the Committee also discussed the idea of enforcing compliance by locking up non-compliant labs, but only after all other approaches

have been exhausted, such as speaking to the Chair and Dean about the issues found in the lab, and still seeing no improvement.

The importance of empowering the Safety Officer in each department was outlined. The Committee noted that in departments where the Safety Officer had the support of the Chair, compliance was reached more readily. The committee also highlighted the fact that the strategy employed to ensure compliance must reflect the issues and the particular situation of the department. Although the lab safety situation has improved in some departments, the ultimate goal of the committee is to have fully compliant labs by 2012. A.M. McCusker will be speaking to the Department Chairs and Deans to discuss how to reach compliance within their departments and faculties.

5.2.2 Chemical Inventory Audit

A.M McCusker discussed the idea of introducing a chemical inventory audit to correct some of the arising issues in laboratories, considering that some of the most common violations are those of chemical storage and labeling. Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry is due for an inspection and the idea of piloting the project in Schulich was explored. The Inspector would ask to see the lab's chemical inventory and then randomly pick 10 chemicals off of the shelves and see if the labeling, MSDS etc match the information listed on the inventory.

The Committee sees the implementation of this program as very difficult. Most labs have hundreds of chemicals and the amount of time needed to complete audits in one department alone would render this project unfeasible. However, the Committee suggested keeping the idea in place but implementing it at a peer-to-peer level, rather than from an Occupational Health and Safety inspection point of view.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Lab Safety Training Tracking

Human Resources is working on a pilot program where PeopleSoft is used to register people for Lab Safety Training. The advantages to this program include the fact that the person would only need their UWO ID for registration – thus eliminating the employee relationship with PeopleSoft and thus addressing the technical problems faced with 4th Year Thesis students. In addition, the completion of the Lab Safety Training will

become part of the person's permanent record and the goal for the future is that the Principal Investigators will be able to see who has completed the training. Another advantage to this program is that it will be accessible to future students or staff who may live in other city or country prior to relocating to Western. This way all necessary training would be completed before they begin work. The registration for the program will begin in mid-July with the first classes being offered in August. A limiting factor to how quickly a new student or staff member can complete their training is the acquisition of a UWO ID. The committee suggested distributing the UWO IDs when offers of admissions and employment go out to the students and staff.

The Biosafety training courses will adopt a similar program in the future, while the WHMIS training is currently undergoing a bulk transfer into the new system. A communication is being prepared by Human Resources to let the Chairs know about the upcoming changes.

7.0 Other Business

7.1 Liquid Nitrogen Update

Implementation will continue over the summer.

8.0 Adjournment

Motion to move: J. Dickey

Seconded by: J. Sparks

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 am.