



Laboratory Safety Committee Meeting

Minutes of Friday, October 28, 2011

10:30 – 12:00 PM, SSB 4220

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

Regrets: R. Maslen, R. Sharma

Recorder: S. Xhiku

1.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion to Approve: S. Mittler

Seconded by: K. Galil

Agenda Approved.

2.0 Approval of June 23rd 2011 Minutes

Motion to Approve: S. Salisbury

Seconded by: J. Whitty

Minutes Approved.

3.0 Business Arising

3.1 Lab Safety Manual

3.1.1 Inspections 2011

In 2011 46% of labs have been non-compliant. Although this is a decrease from the 2010 inspections where 57% of the labs were non-compliant. The category of “Requires Improvement” was introduced this year and about 18% of all labs fell under this category. Compliance had consistently increased until 2009 and then marked a decrease after this year.

3.1.2 Why change?

It was found that 9% of all labs on campus had never reached compliance since the labs safety program started in 2005. Some labs have recurring issues that are not necessarily addressed after the inspection. The issues found during inspections were compared those that were found following the Fire at the University of Manitoba in 2009.

3.2 Program Improvements

3.2.1 Change Plan Overview

The Lab Safety program has been evolving throughout the years to address the safety concerns that are found in UWO laboratories. Low-risk laboratories were eliminated from the program and the focus turned primarily on high and medium-risk laboratories.

3.2.2 Themes from Research

A.M. McCusker worked with Learning and Development on an improvement plan. This included meeting with some researchers to find out their challenges encountered in reaching compliance and what suggestions they had to improve the program. During these meetings the researchers acknowledged the responsibility they have to provide a safe working environment for their staff. The researchers also mentioned that the inspections alone were not enough to bring about change.

Some of the suggestions made from the Committee and the PIs to improve the Lab Safety Program were:

- Increasing education and awareness of the PIs on their responsibility to provide a safe environment to their students and to also understand the legislative requirements behind these safety standards.
- Having a range of cost efficient alternatives to some of the problems encountered in the lab.
- Implementation of punitive measures to labs that do not reach compliance. The Committee explored the possibility of shutting down the labs that do not reach compliance and then using this opportunity to work with the researcher to bring them back to the required safety standards.

3.3 Next Steps

3.3.1 Compliance Consequences

The responsibility and role of the researcher should be communicated to the principal investigators. The main safety legislation applied to labs is the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act. There are no external bodies regulating chemical use in labs as there is for radiation and biohazards however the Tri-Council is looking at including H&S in their reviews. There was a Tri-Council review of the University in February 2011 and there will be another University inspection in 2 years. As controlling risk in labs and more stringent requirements increase we need to take this opportunity to educate the researchers on their responsibilities. Laboratories will be inspected again in the upcoming year and will be locked if all the issues in the lab have not been resolved following a re-inspection.

3.3.2 Action

3.3.2.1 Inspection – Focus

There are 330 medium/high risk labs that are inspected yearly, which fall under the faculties of Engineering, Schulich and Science. The focus of the inspections will begin to target non-compliance and ensure completion of corrective action starting in 2012.

3.3.2.2 Achieving Compliance Options

The University is developing a half-day learning opportunity for all the Health and Safety representatives across departments to better educate them on their roles. The Health and Safety department will also support researchers with suggestions on how to attain and maintain compliance. In the future, minor issues will not require a response from the researchers. In the event of noncompliance and a lack of response from the principal investigator the lab will be shut down and the locks of the lab will be changed. The lab will not open again until compliance has been reached.

(VOTE) Motion to Approve: S. Mittler Seconded: J. Dickey

Action approved.

4.0 Other Business

4.1 Liquid Nitrogen Update

Cryogenic liquid transport in elevators status: The new Physics elevator will be a pilot for using card access to control the elevator to transport liquid Nitrogen. Signage will be attached to the elevators in the affected buildings with instructions for transporting cryogenic liquids no personnel are to enter the elevator when cryogenic liquids are being transported. The plan will be implemented over the next month. J. Whitty will look into elevator synchronization mechanisms in the Chemistry building.

5.0 Adjournment

Motion to move: J. Sparks

Seconded by: K. Baines

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.