

College of Public Health
Laboratory and Safety Committee

Meeting minutes from 6/19/2008

In attendance:

Ira Richards – chair

Angela Salem (with two student guests)

Aisha Turnbull

Steve Mlynarek

Azliyati Azizan

Mike Haywood

Jay Evans

Marie Bourgeois

The meeting was convened at 10:03 AM. Dr. Richards briefly described the origination and function of the committee. The committee is composed of representatives from every department. This meeting could not be considered official due to the lack of a quorum (representatives from EPB and CFH were unable to attend). Most of the work of the committee is done via email. Angela and Mike are responsible for keeping the members up to date on compliance. Dr. Richards briefly detailed some of the issues that the committee has dealt with since its inception, specifically accidents and DEH citations for non-compliance.

This meeting was primarily scheduled to discuss the implementation and facilitation of campus-wide initiatives directed at laboratory safety reviews and the proposed Chemical Hygiene Plan. Jay Evans was invited to attend so that he could answer any questions that arose. Additionally Aisha detailed the reason behind mandatory lab inspections currently being conducted. It appears the April DEP inspection was the primary driver; the inspectors were not entirely satisfied and fines were levied on some colleges (not the College of Public Health).

The inspections of individual laboratories are scheduled in advance. A representative from the lab is expected to be on hand while Angela conducts the review. Items of interest include hazardous waste management, chemical storage, fire safety, appropriate signage and personal protective equipment. Deficiencies will trigger a warning letter and corrections must be made within 60 days.

Angela and Aisha were unable to name any areas of concern. They said that the overall response had been favorable. When pressed, they allowed that COPH would likely need to update laboratory signage (flammables, biohazards and contact information). The discussion then turned to the current Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP). Changes have been made to the signature page but the rest is largely intact. Dr. Richards expressed concern about the somewhat generic wording, specifically as applied to labs that have more unique hazards. Aisha responded that the CHPs can be tailored for individual labs.

At this time Dr. Richards brought up the HITS program. He would like to see it reinforced:

1. Instructions for access
2. Better accounting of available/extra reagents
3. Graduate student access granted when necessary to complete inventories
4. HIT lists examined prior to lab inspections to reduce lag time
5. Clarification made between supplies currently being used and those in storage

He also questioned if agents of concern (like toxins and venoms) that may appear on government lists of possible tools of bioterror automatically triggered reams of paperwork when they were not in active use. He then asked if HITS data is restricted by lab or if it is pooled. The rationale is that some individuals (like Dr. Richards) require access to information from all the labs while some individuals need the data from their lab alone. He went on to question whether a central contact person existed in the event a reagent in surplus storage of one lab could be requested by another lab. Under reasonable guidelines he would like a master list of COPH chemicals. Dr. Azizan wanted any such list to be expanded to include IDR facilities. IDR participation in HITS is voluntary due to problems coordinating receiving; some labs receive supplies directly. Dr. Richards expressed an interest in more 'cradle to grave' supervision of chemicals. The bottom line appears to be that HITS has a lot of holes that cannot be addressed in one meeting. Receiving appears to be the main hurdle to tracking.

The next topic was safety. Mike is currently working on laboratory camera for hallways and exits. He is open to suggestion about placement. Dr. Richards brought up the possible purchase of automated external defibrillators. After much discussion concerning placement, training and liability, the issue was tabled. Angela will follow up on questions raised about HITS, notification of faculty and inventory access.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 without a quorum.