

MINUTES
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE, LABORATORY ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, October 16, 2001 (2101G McGavran-Greenberg)

Members present: Lorraine Alexander, Bonnie Taylor-Blake, Bruna Brylawski, James Gilbert, Ray Hackney, Jim Morken, Sheldon Wiggins, Kirby Zeman

Members absent: Paula Murphy, Lola Reid, Mike Fisher, Diane Shugars, Mike Fisher, Todd Gambling, Kathrine Hamil, Liska Lackey

Also present: Anna Wu (Facilities Planning), Peter Krawchyk (Facilities Planning), Bob Marriott (Medical School Planning), Pete Reinhardt (Environment Health and Safety), Riley Splittstoesser (Environment Health and Safety)

Minutes for the meeting held on June 19, 2001 were approved.

University Ergonomics Program

Riley Splittstoesser recently hired ergonomist at EHS was introduced and made brief comments about the ergonomics program. Riley will be investigating ergonomic issues at the university, including research laboratories.

Lab design and Eating in Labs

Anna Wu (Facilities Planning), Peter Krawchyk (Facilities Planning), Bob Marriott (Medical School Planning), and Pete Reinhardt (Environment Health and Safety) were present to participate in the discussion of laboratory design and eating and drinking policies. Ray Hackney presented a review of current regulations, consensus standards and policy statements from other universities. Most standards and policies state that eating should not occur in work areas where hazardous materials are used. The terminology is usually either “work areas” or “laboratories”, “laboratories” being the more restrictive. Of thirty-two website policy statements for universities surveyed, 9 strictly prohibited eating and drinking in laboratories, 11 allowed eating in designated “areas”, and 12 had no policy on their website. It is recognized that unless adequate convenient facilities for eating are provided in close proximity to the labs, it is very difficult to enforce a no eating policy in research laboratories. One suggested design is to provide desk space immediately inside the laboratory facility, separated from the laboratory by a partition. The upper half of the partition is transparent to allow a clear view of the laboratory. The OSHA non-mandatory Appendix A states that lab personnel are to avoid eating and drinking in laboratory areas.

A laboratory incident occurred in 1983 at UNC in which a researcher was thought to have gotten thallium poisoning from washing his soup bowl at the same sink and counter where media containing thallium was prepared.