

Wilhoit named to HSO

by Ellen Horowitz
Staff Writer

Donald G. Willhoit of the UNC School of Public Health was appointed director of the new campus Health and Safety Office (HSO) July 1, in order to comply with the occupational safety guidelines of the North Carolina Safety and Health Act, which goes into effect Aug. 1.

Willhoit heads a staff of 14 in Venable Hall charged with investigating complaints of safety and health hazards and developing a comprehensive plan to insure the safety of University laboratories, dorms and other facilities.

"The most difficult problems we face

concern fire protection and facilities design," Willhoit said Monday. "The fire safety of high-rise dorms is particularly controversial, and the ones here do not meet the standards of new Chapel Hill fire codes adopted since they were built."

He said one of the Office's first priorities would be to increase the number of fire extinguishers and install new alarm systems in the dorms. "I believe the buildings are basically safe, but recent disasters like the one in Brazil raise questions about just how fireproof supposedly safe structures really are."

A fire last winter in a modern high-rise office building in Sao Paulo, Brazil, killed several dozen persons trapped in the top

stories of what was said to be a fireproof structure.

The Health and Safety Office will also supervise UNC's radiation safety program, headed by Francis B. deFriess, who has been named associate director of the new office. Seven University departments use radioactive materials in their laboratories for research and instruction.

Other laboratories utilize a wide variety of toxic materials, ranging from carcinogens to poisonous chemicals such as mercury. Safety programs for these facilities are also being studied. Last year, an accident in a zoology laboratory sent several undergraduates to the hospital with mild cases of mercury poisoning.