Welcome to Summertime at Purdue!

While for you the summer season can mean more time for research on campus, for REM it means that the EPA is coming soon. Usually, the EPA comes to inspect Purdue during the summer months. So make sure all your containers are labeled and closed! And don’t forget about proper HPLC waste collection procedures. Due to previous violations, the EPA has already informed us that they’ll be looking for better compliance this year with HPLC waste. We definitely don’t want to get a fine.

Lab Cleanouts: Frequently Asked Questions

Summertime at Purdue also means it’s time for some of you to clean out your lab spaces. Here are the answers to your most frequently asked questions when it comes to cleaning out your lab. Hint: These tips work for routine waste pick-ups too!

When are cleanouts necessary?

Well, there could be several circumstances:

- Construction and remodeling projects
- Faculty members coming and going at Purdue
- And last but not least, it is possible a lab has just been abandoned.

Regardless of the reason, these labs need to have all their chemicals removed.

How do I even start to think about cleaning out these chemicals? Lab cleanouts can be a long process, so start planning! Make decisions soon about who is going to manage the cleanout and who will be doing the work.

What if radioisotopes were used in the lab?

Contact Sharon Rudolph (49-47969) or Zach Tribbett (49-41478) of REM’s Radiation Safety Group to ensure proper Nuclear Regulatory Commission decommissioning procedures are followed. This must be done before the cleanout process can start.

Can anyone clean out a lab?

Ideally, the graduate students or PI should be in charge of the lab cleanout. But if that’s not possible, someone who is familiar with the lab’s hazards, like a lab manager or a building deputy, would be a good option. The department could also opt to hire undergraduate students as long as they are under direct supervision. In other words, a secretary is probably not the best choice. And remember, if you will be working in the lab, you must have the proper training to handle chemicals. REM can’t do the work for you, but we will be happy to provide any necessary training and advice. Once you’ve been trained, the clean out process can start.

Can’t REM just come and pick up these chemicals?

No! All of the chemicals must be submitted to REM on a Hazardous Materials Pickup Request Form.

How often should I submit pickup requests?

Submit these forms frequently, no more than 50-100 items per pickup. And make sure you fill out the form completely. We will not be able to pick up your waste if we don’t know where it is. Our technicians are on campus picking up chemical waste 40 hours per week. It’s no problem for them to come back to your lab numerous times to pick up chemicals. If you submit frequently, we can actually clear out the chemicals faster!
Should I just put the chemicals in a box for the technicians to pick up? No, please don’t! A better idea is to clear a designated space on a bench or table for chemicals that need to be picked up. Line up the chemicals on the bench so the first item matches Item #1 on the pickup form.

How should chemical mixtures be labeled?
If the chemical waste is a mixture, REM provides orange tags for free. Please provide as much information as possible and list the waste constituents in a percentage format on the tags. The constituents should total 100%. Don’t use any formulas or abbreviations and remember to list any trace items.

Do chemicals in the original manufacturer’s container need an orange label? Nope! The original label is sufficient if it is legible. However, if you know of another lab that could utilize some of your usable chemicals, you could arrange for others to come and pick out items they might need. Note: This is not a required procedure and based only upon your discretion.

What about unknown chemicals? It’s a good idea to have a specific area where you can set aside all unknown chemicals until the end of the cleanout process. Label these unknown items with an orange Hazardous Waste tag and then submit them just like you would any other chemical on a Hazardous Materials pick-up request as “Unknown Solid” or “Unknown Liquid.”

Do you take...? We take anything that has chemicals. This includes soaps and cleaning products. We do not take empty containers.

Got another question about lab cleanouts? Ask Amy! E-mail her at atheivag@purdue.edu or call at 49-69359.

On a Lighter Side...

THE FUME HOOD: Where does it go??

“Piled Higher and Deeper” by Jorge Cham
www.phdcomics.com

Looks like this hood could use some cleaning!

Do you have a lab safety question or issue you’d like Amy to address in this newsletter? Let her know!

E-mail atheivag@purdue.edu; Phone 49-69359