WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS POLICY

Eating, Drinking, and Related Activities in Laboratories

Effective Date: January 1, 2007
Revised: April 30, 2010

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:
Eating, drinking, gum chewing, or similar activities within laboratories can result in the accidental ingestion of hazardous materials (chemical radiological, biological). Good laboratory practice, which is supported by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), seeks to eliminate this potential route of exposure and these agencies have guidelines which prohibit these activities in areas where hazardous materials are present. In addition, good lab practice incorporates standard hand hygiene practices.

SCOPE:
This policy applies to all staff, faculty, students and University guests entering University facilities where hazardous materials (chemical, biological or radioactive) are used, handled or stored.

POLICY:
Eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, the application of cosmetics, the storage of food and beverages or similar activities are not permitted in laboratories or other facilities where hazardous materials are used, handled or stored. Food waste, wrappers, containers, etc. must not be placed in laboratory trash cans as this is considered evidence of food or beverage consumption within the laboratory. Such activities are permitted in an area (defined as a room with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door) separated from the laboratory space. If a separate area can only be accessed by going through the laboratory, then only covered food or beverage items may be carried through the laboratory. Travel mugs with lids are appropriate for coffee transport. Filling or rinsing of beverage or food containers in designated laboratory sinks is allowed only if no other sinks are available, if water in these sinks has been determined to be potable, and if the chosen sink area is not contaminated with hazardous materials. Sinks approved for the disposal of low-level aqueous based radioactive materials cannot be used for food/drink related activities. Food or beverage containers may not be stored in the laboratory and washed drinking cups, food containers or eating utensils may not be dried on laboratory drying racks. Refrigerators used for storing food or beverages should be dedicated to food only and should be located outside of the laboratory.

PROCEDURE:
Each school, department, or division is responsible for identifying laboratories where eating, drinking, and similar activities are prohibited, and for notifying individuals of appropriate areas for such activities. When planning renovations or new construction, the
school, department, division and laboratory director must provide appropriate areas for eating and drinking which are completely separated from the laboratory. For new construction, access to eating and drinking areas must be from another clean space and not only from within the laboratory. For renovations, creation of a new or expanded eating and drinking area that can only be accessed from within a laboratory must be reviewed and approved by EH&S, the Institutional Biological and Chemical Safety Committee (IBC) and the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) prior to renovation. Specific procedures must be developed by each laboratory director for the transport of covered food and beverage items through the lab and for use of laboratory sink. Updated written procedures for this purpose must be maintained in the laboratory Environmental Health and Safety Manual (Blue Book), and be readily accessible for review and for inspection. All individuals with access to the laboratory must be trained on this policy. It is each individual’s responsibility, along with the laboratory director and division, department and school officials to ensure this policy is enforced.

This policy has been approved by the Washington University Institutional Biological and Chemical Safety Committee (IBC) and the Washington University Radiation Safety Committee (RSC).