

Occupational Health and Safety Update – August 1997

The following is the second article in a series submitted by the SSMLT Occupational Health and Safety Committee. It is designed to assist laboratories meet the safety requirements of laboratory inspections.

Fire Safety

Components of a good fire safety program include the following:

1. Laboratory Fire Safety Committee

A facility Fire Safety committee should be in place and have representation from the laboratory. This committee could function as part of the Safety committee. The local fire marshal should have direct involvement with this committee. A facility fire emergency procedure should be in place specifying laboratory involvement.

The committee should plan periodic fire drills that occur at different areas in the facility. A laboratory action plan should be in place to respond to fire drills.

An evacuation route should be documented and posted.

2. Fire Safety Manual

The Fire Safety Manual could be incorporated into the laboratory Safety Manual. This manual should be in place and be readily available to all staff. It should be required reading as part of an orientation process for all new employees.

The manual should state: No Smoking allowed, location of fire alarm stations in the laboratory, and location of fire extinguishers and blankets. Personnel should be instructed regarding the use of the fire safety equipment with practical training.

This manual should be reviewed annually.

3. Major Fire Hazards

Flammables must be properly stored and disposed of. Safety cans should be used when appropriate. Bulk flammables should be stored in a safety room or cabinet. When dispensing flammable liquids from large metal containers; ensure the containers are bonded and grounded to avoid build up of static charge. Storage areas must be adequately ventilated.

Major fire hazards should have smoke and fire prevention devices and be readily accessible for fire department personal.

Steps should be taken to reduce environmental hazard when disposing of flammable and volatile fluids.

4. Fire Safety Audits

Regular internal inspections should be conducted to ensure compliance and to enhance employees knowledge of fire safety policies and procedures.

Fire extinguishers must be inspected annually.