

Occupational Health and Safety Update - March 1997

The following is the first in a series of articles to be submitted by the SSMLT Occupational Health and Safety Committee designed to assist laboratories to prepare the safety component of upcoming laboratory inspections.

General Safety

Elements of a good safety program include the following:

1. **Laboratory Safety Committee**

A Safety Committee should be in place and should have representation from each section of the laboratory, where staffing levels permit. Small laboratories may choose to have one representative on an institutional Safety Committee. The Committee should meet at least four times a year and be chaired by the Laboratory director or another senior member of staff.

The committee should:

- provide a forum by which staff can bring forward safety concerns
- review existing safety practises
- review accidents and potential accidents and decide if changes in procedure are necessary to improve the level of safety.

2. **Safety Manual**

A Safety Manual should be in place, be readily available to all staff and be required reading for all new employees. The manual should give specific instructions for the safe handling of all hazards associated with the particular laboratory, ie. Biological hazards, fire safety, electrical safety, waste disposal, chemical safety, etc. The manual should also describe personnel protective equipment or safety devices that are available and how and when to use them. The manual should be reviewed annually.

3. **Evaluation of Accidents**

A mechanism must be in place for the timely reporting, documentation and evaluation of accidents. All injuries and accidents should be reported to the institution's Employee Health Department.

4. **Safety Audits**

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