

Guide to Establishing Responsibilities in Shared Space and Equipment Areas

System-wide there has been increased emphasis on researchers sharing laboratory/teaching space and equipment to make more efficient use of these resources. Examples of shared use are core facilities and analytical equipment located in a researcher's laboratory but shared with others. Often it is not clear who is responsible for the shared space or equipment. When this occurs and hazardous or radioactive materials are involved, safety and regulatory compliance problems may arise. These problems frequently involve contamination or waste that is not identified or labeled properly. Undetected chemical or radioactive contamination could cause potentially harmful exposures to others using the space or equipment, and not labeling these materials violates several federal and state regulations.

For these reasons, Environmental Health and Safety Advisory Committee (EHSAC) highly recommends that a [competent individual](#) be designated as the person responsible for managing shared space and equipment. An alternate should also be specified so that management continues when the primary designee is absent.

The designee will develop, implement, and enforce basic procedures to control contamination and wastes. Adherence to the procedures should prevent most contamination and waste problems; however, if a problem occurs, the person responsible shall ensure the issue is corrected in a timely manner. What follows are EHSAC recommended procedures for the different shared space and equipment scenarios.

Securable research space recommended procedures

Securable research space is research related space with locking doors used by more than one Principal Investigator (PI) or faculty member. Examples of securable space include, but are not limited to, instrument rooms, cold rooms, warm rooms, and darkrooms.

Recommended procedures:

1. Departments, colleges, or research units must designate a competent individual as the single point-of-contact responsible for each securable room which is used in support of research but is shared by more than one PI.
2. Biological, chemical, or radioactive stock and in-process materials must be properly labeled and the room must be secured when no one in the sharing group is in the area.
3. When radioactive material is present, the room must be posted/labeled in accordance with the PIs' authorizations and unsecured material must be under the direct control of a radiation worker.

4. Chemical and radioactive wastes must either be secured in locked cabinets (separated and identified by laboratory group) or returned to the laboratory of the group generating the waste.
5. No drinks or foodstuffs may be stored.

Securable teaching space recommended procedures

Securable teaching (or academic) space is space with locking doors used by more than one faculty member. Examples of securable teaching space include, but are not limited to, stockrooms and teaching laboratories.

Recommended procedures:

1. Departments, colleges, or research units must designate a competent individual as the single point-of-contact responsible for each securable room used in support of education and shared by faculty.
2. Most biological, chemical, or radioactive stock must be stored in a preparation room and be properly labeled. Some stock may be in teaching laboratories if secured or attended and are the responsibility of the assigned staff member.
3. Chemical and radioactive wastes must remain in the laboratory where generated or brought intact, without mixing, to adjoining area also under responsibility of same assigned staff member responsible for the laboratory generating the waste.

Unsecured teaching space recommended procedures

Unsecured teaching (or academic) space is space without locking doors used by more than one faculty member. An example of unsecured teaching space includes, but is not limited to, an equipment room without doors housing multiple laboratory groups' refrigerators, freezers, etc.

Recommended procedures:

1. Departments, colleges, or research units must designate a competent individual as the single point-of-contact responsible for each unsecurable room. The competent individual must also have some responsibility for the corresponding curriculum utilizing the space.
2. All biological, chemical and or radioactive stock or in process materials will be secured in individual equipment, e.g. refrigerators, freezers, storage cabinets.
3. Secured equipment must be properly posted or labeled to identify contents.
4. No chemical or radioactive waste may be stored.
5. No drinks or food stuffs may be stored.

Competent individual refers to a Principal Investigator who is responsible for the space; however a PI can designate an alternate research person only if that designee has comparable responsibility and authority for the space.

