The purpose of this fact sheet is to summarize why eating and drinking are not permitted in areas where chemical, radiological, and/or biological materials are used or stored.

**Definitions**
The term “eating and drinking” refers to eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics, adjusting contact lenses, taking/storing medicine, and other related activities. It also includes items and equipment used for storing, preparing and consuming food and beverages.

The term “hazardous materials” includes biological agents, chemical, radioactive materials, and waste from all of these materials.

**Reasons for Prohibition**
The main reasons why eating and drinking are not permitted in areas using or storing hazardous materials are personal safety risks and risks of non-compliance with regulatory agencies and granting agency requirements that may impact an individual, a work unit, or the institution as a whole.

**Personal Safety Risks**
Personal safety risks can result from cross-contamination and ingestion. For example, gloves worn outside the lab; airborne materials settling out or condensing on food surfaces and utensils; consumable items placed on a contaminated surface; rubbing the eye, nail biting, nose blowing, or adjusting contact lenses.

**Prudent Practices in the Laboratory by the National Research Council includes these precautions for minimizing exposure:**
- Eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, applying cosmetics, and taking medicine in laboratories where hazardous chemicals are used should be strictly prohibited.
- Food, beverages, cups, and other drinking and eating utensils should not be stored in areas where hazardous chemicals are handled or stored.
- Glassware use for laboratory operations should never be used to prepare or consume food or beverages.
- Laboratory refrigerators, ice chests, cold rooms, ovens, and so forth should not be used for food storage or preparation.
- Laboratory water sources and deionized laboratory water should not be used as drinking water.
- Laboratory chemicals should never be tasted.
- A pipette bulb or aspirator should be used to pipette chemicals or to start a siphon; pipetting should never be done by mouth.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water immediately after working with any laboratory chemicals, even if gloves have been worn.
**Regulatory Compliance**
The main compliance and grant risks summarized below include regulations (either federal or state laws), consensus standards, and granting agency requirements. These mandates are also included in University programs for occupation health and safety and radiation protection.

- The **OSHA Lab Standard** and the **University Chemical Hygiene Plan** prohibit eating/drinking in areas where hazardous chemicals are in use.
- The **OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard** and the **ODU Biosafety Manual** prohibit eating/drinking in areas where a reasonable likelihood exists for exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- The **University Biological Safety Program** states that eating, drinking, smoking, handling contact lenses, or applying cosmetics are not permitted where rDNA research is done, or where there is reasonable likelihood of exposure to potentially infectious material. This is based on National Institutes of Health guidelines for research involving recombinant DNA molecules and on *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories*.
- The **Virginia Department of Health**, Bureau of Radiological Health and the University Radiation Protection Manual prohibits eating/drinking in areas where radioactive materials are present.
- Granting agencies such as the **National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense** require that both the unit receiving the grant and the institution as a whole to be in compliance with their guidelines and the regulations of other agencies such as OSHA, EPA, and VDH.

**Based on the information cited above, it is the University’s policy that eating and drinking are not permitted in areas where chemical, radiological, and/or biological materials are used or stored.**