Prohibition of Food & Drink in ODU Laboratories

Introduction

Eating, drinking, gum chewing, or similar activities within laboratories where teaching or research involving toxic substances take place, can result in the accidental ingestion of hazardous materials (chemical, biological, and/or radiological). Good laboratory practices, which is supported by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Prudent Practices in the Laboratory (PPL), 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.

Policy

Eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, the application of cosmetics or contact lenses, the storage of food and beverages or similar activities are not permitted in laboratories or other facilities where hazardous materials (as listed below) are used, handled or stored.

Under no circumstance shall food or drink be stored or consumed in a laboratory, space or room containing:

- **Moderate, High or Extreme Hazard Carcinogenic materials**
- **Radioactive materials**
- **Unbound engineered nanomaterials**
- **Highly toxic chemicals (a substance with an oral LD50 of less than 50 mg/kg or skin toxicity of less than 200 mg/kg)**
- **Research animals, or**
- **Microorganisms designated as Biosafety Level (BSL) 1 or 2**
  *BSL-1 labs may seek written approval for any exemptions

NOTE: Other harmful substances not included above may also apply and should be taken into consideration when determining food/drink prohibition. Contact EH&S for a consultation if further assistance is needed.

Exceptions

Where consistent with building, departmental, or other local rules, Principal Investigators may allow food or beverages in certain rooms in the following situations:

a) A room in which the above conditions do not apply. These rooms must have clearly designated “Clean Areas” separated from the work space and only on the condition that no hazardous materials are allowed within the designated clean area at any time.

OR

b) A connecting room that is separated from the lab with floor to ceiling walls and a closing door. If the designated clean area can only be accessed by going through the laboratory, then all food and beverage items must be covered while being carried through the laboratory.

Regulations

OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard;

I. 29 CFR 1910.1030 (d)(2)(ix) - Eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics or lip balm, and handling contact lenses are prohibited in work areas where there is a reasonable likelihood of occupational exposure.

II. 29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(2)(x)) - Food and drink shall not be kept in refrigerators, freezers, shelves, cabinets or on countertops or benchtops where blood or other potentially infectious materials are present.

OSHA Laboratory Standard;

I. 29 C.F.R. 1910.1450 Appendix A (d) - Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, or application of cosmetics in areas where laboratory chemicals are present (22, 24, 32, 40); wash hands before conducting these activities (23, 24). Avoid storage, handling, or consumption of food or beverages in storage areas, refrigerators, glassware or utensils which are also used for laboratory operations (23, 24, 226).

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 or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules and on Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories.

EPA regulations focus mainly on materials management and environmental impacts. However, regulatory inspectors may refer issues regulated by another agency to that agency. Therefore, EPA may refer occupational issues to OSHA.

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 IDPH.

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.

Guidelines

Prudent Practices in the Laboratory (published by National Academic Press, 2011);

I. 5.C.2.2 Avoiding Ingestion of Hazardous Chemicals - 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 used 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 for drinking water.

II. 5E-1 Biohazardous Materials - Never eat, drink, smoke, handle contact lenses, apply cosmetics, or take or apply medicine in the laboratory.

III. 5E-2 Radioactive Materials - Never eat, drink, smoke, handle contact lenses, apply cosmetics, or take or apply medicine in the laboratory, and keep food, drinks, cosmetics, and tobacco products out of the laboratory entirely so that they cannot become contaminated.