ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Safe Operating Procedure

(Revised 7/24)

CHEMICAL SECURITY

Background

Security of dangerous chemicals in laboratories, shops, and other areas at UNL is of increasing concern. While the theft and misuse of chemicals is not commonplace, care must be taken to reduce the possibility of such events. Certain items, such as explosives and items regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, Institutional Biosafety Committee, Radiation Safety Committee, and other entities, may be subject to more restrictive requirements. For more information, refer to the EHS SOPs:

- ***Security Advice for Biological Research Facilities***
- ***Security of Radioactive Materials at UNL***.

General Precautions

- Keep laboratory, stock room, and other work area doors closed at all times, and locked when not occupied. Freezers and refrigerators in corridors are particularly susceptible to access and should be locked at all times.
- Storage vessels, such as fuel tanks, anhydrous ammonia tanks, etc., should be equipped with locking mechanisms to prevent theft. When possible, these items should be stored in secured fenced areas. If it is not possible to store in fenced areas, these types of vessels should be stored in well-lit and easily monitored areas during times when the facility is not staffed.
- Ask strangers to exit the work area if they are not authorized to be there. Strangers should always be able to account for their presence. If you do not feel comfortable with their answer, be prepared to take appropriate actions, such as 1) asking them if they need assistance; 2) politely asking them to leave the area; 3) asking them to follow you to the department office to seek information; or, 4) if necessary, calling the UNL Police for assistance. Know how to handle strangers in advance so that your response is proper and effective. The UNL Police can provide training upon request.
- Know the building schedule for locking doors. If strangers are present in the building after it has been secured, call the UNL Police and report the situation.

- Inspect all packages of chemicals arriving at the work area. If stains are present on the package, or the package is damaged, isolate and secure the package and call EHS.
- Keep an accurate inventory of highly toxic, dangerous, or reactive materials. If the inventory includes particularly dangerous chemicals or chemicals that are commonly used for illicit purposes, do not post the inventory in a public area. Refer to EHS SOPs, ***General Guidance for Chemical Ordering, Receipt, Distribution, Use, and Storage*** and ***Door Postings for Potentially Hazardous Locations*** for additional instructions.
- Provide additional security for highly toxic, dangerous, or reactive chemicals, such as a locked cabinet with controlled access to keys or other credentials. Consider using an access validation process for such materials- e.g., access requires approval of another person each time, and perhaps, physical distribution by a second person. Discourage working alone. Consult UNL Human Resources regarding background checks for all persons who will have access to these types of materials.
- Report losses to the UNL Police and EHS immediately.
- Notify UNL Police if non-chemical items are missing from work areas, such as nutrient agar, flasks, balances, scales, and other processing equipment.
- Report all suspicious activity to the UNL Police, including any threats to personnel or facilities.
- Report all attempted burglaries, sabotage to facilities or equipment and all vandalism, including any sign of product tampering, to the UNL Police.
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers by all telephones.

To the extent possible, use less hazardous substitutes, use and store the smallest feasible quantities of chemicals, and reduce or eliminate any unnecessary storage, transportation, and handling of chemicals.