



## GENERAL LABORATORY HOUSEKEEPING

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### Introduction

This document applies to all research, teaching, diagnostic and clinical laboratories at UNL. Good housekeeping practices can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, fires and exposure to hazardous materials. Spills and accidents are more likely to occur in cluttered workspaces. It is the responsibility of all researchers to maintain a safe and clean laboratory environment.

### General

- **Keep containers and equipment away from the edge of benches.**
  - » Organize bench tops with large equipment in the back and progressively smaller equipment toward the front. Leave sufficient space to perform your work safely and to avoid reaching over items that can easily be knocked over, such as graduated cylinders or flasks. Keep all containers and glassware at least two (2) inches away from the front of the lab bench.
- **Promptly clean and properly store glassware.**
  - » Avoid accumulating glassware on lab benches and in sinks. Promptly clean and store glassware in its designated/protected location at the end of an experiment or work session.
- **Regularly check glassware for starring, cracks, and chips and promptly discard or repair damaged glassware.**
  - » Dispose of glassware in accordance with the EHS SOP, *Glass Disposal – Intact or Broken*
- **Discard disposable pipettes and pipette tips immediately after use.**
  - » Take care not to clutter benchtops or the floor with discarded pipets or pipette tips.
- **Provide physical separation of regular trash containers from biohazardous and radioactive material waste containers to avoid improper disposal of contaminated materials.**
  - » Prominently label biohazardous and radioactive material waste disposal containers.
- **Keep drawers and cabinets closed when not in use.**

- **Maintain clear access to utility controls and emergency equipment at all times.**
  - » Remove any equipment or clutter that interferes with access to or visibility of eyewash stations, safety showers, fire alarm pull stations, fire alarm strobes, fire extinguishers, electrical panels, knife switches, equipment on/off controls, ventilation controls, etc.

## Chemicals

- **Keep benchtops, scales, and other equipment clean; promptly clean up spill residues and other dirt and grease accumulations.**
- **Keep bulk chemicals stored in cabinets or designated storage rooms.**
  - » Only obtain the amount needed for your current work session. Doing this keeps benches free of excess chemicals and reduces exposure in case of a spill or accident.
- **Containers used for chemical storage must have lids/caps.**
  - » Lids and caps reduce the possibility of a spill and potential release of fumes into the lab.
- **Label all containers of chemicals/experimental intermediates and keep a current chemical inventory.**
  - » Refer to the EHS SOPs *Chemical Container Labeling* and *General Guidance for Chemical Ordering, Receipt, Distribution, Use & Storage* for more information.

## Aisles and Floors

- **Keep aisles and passageways clear at all times.**
  - » Aisles are the passageways to safety in the event of a fire or chemical release. They should be easy to navigate even when visibility is poor (e.g., smoke is in the laboratory). Obstructing aisles and passageways is a fire code violation and contributes to slips, trips, falls, and other accidents.
- **Immediately clean up any spilled liquids or ice on floors.**
  - » Liquids and frozen liquids (e.g., ice) on floors can lead to slips, trips, and falls. Leaking equipment (oil from vacuum pumps) can also be a slip hazard.
- **Repair damage to and protrusions from the floor immediately.**
  - » Damaged floor tiles and curled or worn mats represent trip hazards.
  - » Promptly report damaged floor tiles to the service desk. Do not attempt to remove or repair.
- **Use appropriate trash and waste containers to prevent clutter and debris on floors.**



Custodial Services provides basic cleaning services only and **DOES NOT** clean up unidentified spills in labs and **WILL NOT** sweep up lab debris (e.g., pipette tips, paper, sample tubes, etc. on the floor).

## Lab Equipment

Detailed guidance for housekeeping related to specific lab equipment is available in the following EHS SOPs:

- *Laboratory Hood/Cabinet Identification and Use*
- *Biosafety Cabinets*
- *Autoclave Operation and Use*
- *Autoclave Performance Testing*
- *Centrifuge Safety*
- *Electrophoresis Safety*
- *Microtome Safety*

## References

- *National Research Council. 2011. Prudent Practices in the Laboratory: Handling and Management of Chemical Hazards, Updated Version. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/12654>.*
- *OSHA General Industry Standard 29 CFR 1910*
- *NFPA 45 and 101*