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VPRS-001: Prohibition of Food and Drink in Research Laboratories

Date: 11/06/2008 Status: Final Last Revised: 11/06/2019

Policy Type: Research and Graduate Studies

Contact Office: [Environmental Health and Safety](#)

Oversight Executive: Vice President for Research

Applies To: University faculty, staff, and students.

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Reason for Policy:

Minimizes the risks of personnel being exposed to hazardous materials and assists in compliance with federal regulations, consensus health and safety guidelines, and good laboratory practices. This is in keeping with federal regulations (NRC and OSHA) as well as CDC & NIH biosafety guidelines. Each prohibits the consumption, use, or storage of food and drink in the work area.

Definition of Terms in Statement:

- Hazardous Materials:**
Agents, whether solid, liquid or gas, that can harm persons or other living organisms, property or the environment. These would include materials which are radioactive, biological, flammable, explosive, corrosive, or toxic.
- Work Area:**
A work area includes, but is not limited to the following: a laboratory, laboratory support room, makerspace, shop or studio where work with any hazardous material could contaminate work surfaces, release airborne particles, mists or vapors or other means by which materials could spread with or without the knowledge of personnel or others in the area.

Policy Statement:

The consumption, use, or storage of food and drink is prohibited in work areas where animals are handled or hazardous chemicals, biological, or radioactive materials are stored and used.

Exception: When the only hazardous materials used in the work area are chemicals that are not anticipated to present a health hazard, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) may be asked to evaluate the work area to approve an appropriate location.

1.

Guidance Regarding Areas Used for Consumption or Storage of Food and Drink:

Consumption or storage of food and drink must occur in a room which is visually distinct from the work area where hazardous materials are being used or stored. A room with floor to ceiling walls and a closeable door is preferred for all work areas not covered by the "exception" above. However, many University facilities were not designed with separate rooms for this purpose. As a result, EHS personnel may assess the work area to approve an appropriate location.

Under no circumstances may food or drink be stored in refrigerators, freezers, temperature-controlled rooms, or other areas where chemical reagents, biological specimens, radioactive material, animals, or other hazardous substances currently are, will be, or have been used or stored.

2.

Compliance with Policy:

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or expulsion in accordance with relevant University policies and may result in prosecution in accordance with state and federal law.

Non-compliance with safety and health regulations may be subject to enforcement and penalties (OSHA 29 CFR 1910.141, 12VAC5-481-1110).

Procedures:

Any requests for exemption to this policy must be initiated by the work area personnel. EHS staff will evaluate the work area, and the hazards present, to determine if a location can be safely isolated from spills, splashes, or projection of hazardous material.

Related Information:

Chemical Safety: [Chemical Hygiene Plan](#)

Radiation Safety: [Radiation Safety Guide](#)

Radiation Safety: [Radiation Safety Notebook](#)

Major Category: Research and Graduate Studies Policies

Next Scheduled Review: 11/06/2022

Approved by, Date: Vice President for Research, 11/06/2008

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