School/College/Unit Laboratory and Research Safety Structure

Overview

As part of the University of Michigan's efforts to promote laboratory and research safety, the Vice President for Research and the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer have established the U-M Laboratory and Research Safety Committee (LRSC). The role of the LRSC is to promote safety in academic laboratories and research, and serve as the monitoring body for safety-related mechanisms created at the school/college/unit level.

The relationship between the LRSC and the respective mechanisms formed at the school/college/unit level is intended to be multi-directional. For example, the LRSC – working closely with OSEH – will disseminate information to the schools/colleges/units regarding research safety policies and practices. The LRSC will likewise receive concerns from the schools/colleges/units about safety challenges and will address reports of research safety issues arising from these areas.

The ultimate goal of this initiative is to foster personal responsibility and accountability for research safety among faculty and investigators, while reinforcing school/college/unit and University oversight and support. Safety committee guiding principles, responsibilities, and suggested structures are provided in this document; individual schools/colleges (and/or departments/units) may adopt stricter criteria, as needed.

What we need from you

The plan you submit should provide a brief description of the type of research in your unit and outline the responsibilities and structure and include information that addresses identification, communication, and resolution of safety-related issues. The safety structure you propose can range from an individual assigned safety responsibility for the unit up to full-scale committee structures for large units with major research operations. Understanding that not all research is performed in laboratories, and not all research involves hazardous operations, the plan should be flexible enough to fit within your management system and the level of hazards involved. The following points will help you to determine the scale of safety structure that is right for your unit.

- Does the type of laboratory or research activity in your unit involve hazardous chemicals, biologicals, radiation, or equipment capable of producing direct or indirect hazards? Y/N

- Evaluate the types of activity within your unit and determine if there may be other safety issues you are concerned about. As examples, are you sending faculty and students into inherently hazardous locations? While the direct research may not involve hazards, does collecting samples involve hazardous activities such as working on a lake or river, or around excavation zones, etc.? Y/N

- If you can answer "No" to the first two bullets, a safety committee is not necessary; however, you may want to consider assigning safety manager responsibility to an individual to act as a monitor for changes in the situation and to act as your liaison with OSEH and the LRSC.

- If the laboratory activity or research performed does involve some degree of hazard, but it is very limited in scope (i.e. only one laboratory or only performed occasionally) it may not be necessary to have a large-scale committee structure. This guideline provides examples of what a smaller safety structure might look like.

- Schools/colleges/units that already have an established safety structure can submit a description of the existing staffing responsibilities, charge, and standard operating procedures.

- Units that do not yet have an existing safety structure can use this guideline to help develop a plan, scaling the structure to suit the size of your unit.

- Smaller units may consider combining efforts with other units, where appropriate, by sharing safety committee responsibilities across schools/colleges or shared facilities.

- Units that include large and varied research operations may want to design a system where those entities form their own safety sub-committees that in turn report to the unit-wide safety committee.

We ask that each school/college/unit ensure that the guiding principles outlined in this document are addressed by the safety structure you establish. We also encourage you to refer to the U-M Academic Laboratory and Research Safety Policy (attached) for guidance on roles and responsibilities. Please submit your plans, a note indicating a negative response if you do not feel there is a need for a formal structure in your unit, or any questions on this program to Jonah Lee (jonahlee@umich.edu) in OSEH. Submitted plans will be reviewed by the LRSC to ensure the safety structure proposed meets the goals of the Laboratory and Research Safety Initiative.

Timeline:

- March 31, 2016: Plans and/or documents due to the LRSC
- April 29, 2016: Outcome of LRSC review of submitted plans
- June 30, 2016: School/college/unit safety structure established

Principles and Responsibilities

Guiding Principles for School/College/Unit Safety Structure

1) Promote safety in all laboratory and research activities and support awareness of applicable rules and regulations;
2) Establish a means to identify and correct unsafe practices and to report incidents and near-misses to OSEH;
3) Make recommendations to school/college/unit leadership for improvements to the culture of research safety.

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Unit Laboratory & Research Safety Structure Responsibilities

The responsibilities of an effective school/college/unit safety structure could include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Convene regular meetings to discuss safety related issues, improvements, and recommendations: including review of accident and near-miss reports.
- Establish regular communication with OSEH representative(s) to ensure regulatory compliance and proactive solutions for potential safety related issues.
- Establish a system of self-inspections (with regular frequency) in addition to the regular OSEH departmental inspections; including identification of areas that have not been inspected and document as such.
- Ensure appropriate monitoring and documentation of corrected identified deficiencies/issues within the unit as recommended by OSEH.
- Develop a regular report for OSEH, academic department chair, and submission to the LRSC.
- Act as, or identify, the 'safety point of contact' during emergency drills and procedures, educational opportunities, and laboratory safety information dissemination; as confirmed by OSEH and DPSS emergency management office.
- Establish a mechanism to escalate safety issues to the dean, OSEH, and/or the LRSC.

Guidelines for school/college/unit laboratory & research safety committee structure

Suggested Committee Membership:

The committee could be composed of the following members, depending on the size and scope of the school/college (or department/unit if deemed appropriate). It is recognized that units of varying size may have different needs. However, adherence to the general principles is recommended. Please indicate contact information of designated personnel with appointment duration and selection process (e.g., 3 years; appointed by dean/senior department staff):

- **Committee Chair**
- **Associate Committee Chair**
- **Department/Unit Safety Coordinator(s)**
- **Safety Monitor(s)**
- **Alternate Safety Monitor(s)**

Standing representatives from OSEH, Public Safety, or other U-M units will be designated membership and additional personnel could be invited to attend meetings as consultants.

Committee Chair Responsibilities:

- Schedule, organize, and chair regular committee meetings (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or as needed)
- Distribute regular reports that include meeting minutes to OSEH and to the entire school/college

- Present regularly a safety committee review for the college/school senior staff
- Take action to help resolve recognized safety needs or problems
- Assist senior staff in appointing safety monitors to represent their respective areas
- Set-up, coordinate, and appoint safety monitors to conduct regular safety inspections
- Represent the school/college on other unit or university safety committees, as needed
- Maintain a full roster of laboratory and research personnel at the college/school, including designated lab space, for emergency and reporting purposes

Associate Chair Responsibilities:

- Assume duties of the chair during a chair's absence
- Attend regular safety committee meetings
- Work with the OSEH Department on safety related issues and concerns in the college/school

Department/Unit Safety Coordinator's Responsibilities:

- Act as safety liaison between the academic or research operations and OSEH, and with authority delegated by the dean or chair or safety committee to deal with safety issues that arise during research operations
- Disseminate information from the dean, OSEH, or safety committees to appropriate personnel in the department regarding research and lab safety.
- Perform periodic walk-throughs of academic laboratory and research areas to proactively and reactively identify safety issues that require mitigation or reporting to OSEH
- Accompany OSEH staff at a regular frequency (as determined by OSEH department and size of the unit) on scheduled inspections

[*]***Safety Monitor Responsibilities:***

- Attend regular safety committee meetings
- Perform regular safety inspection of assigned areas, complete the reporting form, and provide a summary at the committee meeting
- Note and report all emergent safety issues in the assigned areas to the safety committee
- With the representative faculty, advisor or manager perform regular monthly safety and housekeeping inspections, or when requested

Alternate Safety Monitor Responsibilities:

- Attend regular safety committee meetings
- Perform the duties of the safety monitor whenever he/she is not present or available and assist the safety monitor in his/her duties as needed

[*] Depending on department/unit size and preference, additional personnel may be necessary to distribute responsibilities. The safety monitor mechanism is intended to be supportive to the safety coordinator and provide flexibility to delegate responsibilities; otherwise safety monitor responsibilities can be assigned to the safety coordinator position.

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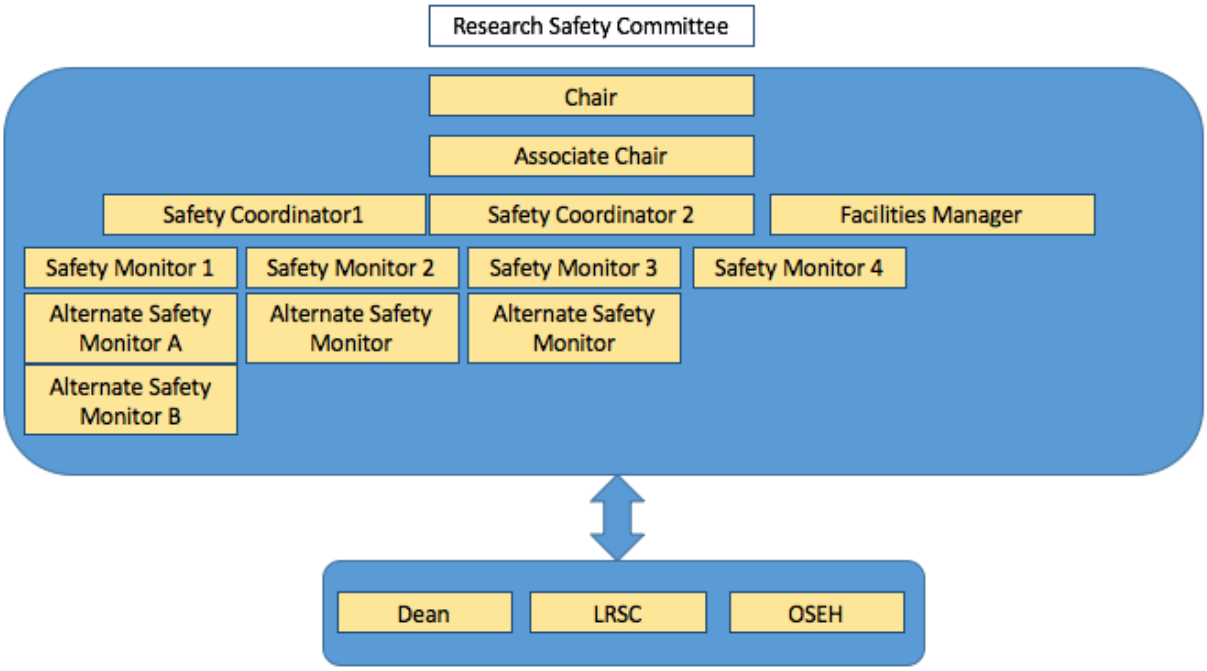
Supplement

Suggested examples of large and small unit organization:

Large Unit:



Small Unit: