

Chemical Hazard Exposure in RAR Facilities

Incident:

Over the past year, there have been multiple instances of chemical hazard exposures in various buildings within Research Animal Resources (RAR), including CCRB, TRF, and MCB. It ranges from labs removing hazardous waste cards too soon, not understanding the proper procedures such as where to place dirty cages during chemical administration, to not labeling cages as hazardous at all. These situations pose a significant occupational safety concern for RAR staff who handle these cages and animals.

Contributing Factors:

In many of these cases laboratory staff are frequently not adequately trained on their laboratory Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for handling chemical hazards. This deficiency results in the improper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and engineering controls, thereby increasing the risk of exposure. Furthermore, when these chemical hazards are utilized in animal research, the RAR staff are often not informed and remain unprotected.

Corrective Actions:

1. **Lab-Specific Training:** Lab staff must receive lab-specific training, including training on all hazardous chemicals used in the laboratory.
 2. **Notification:** Notify the RAR Supervisor of the intent to use a chemical hazard at least two weeks prior to planned use. Refer to the attached communication from IACUC regarding this requirement. The RAR Supervisor will provide the necessary door and cage cards.
 3. **Door Card Posting:** Post a Yellow “Chemical Hazard” Door card on the outside of the room to notify anyone entering about the potential chemical hazard use. This information should include the current protocol number, contact info, chemical hazard used, etc. Once the study is complete, the card can be flipped over or removed.
 4. **Cage Identification:** Each treated cage should be properly identified with a Yellow “Chemical Hazard” cage card that includes the chemical hazard used, the hazard class, the route of administration, contact info, etc.
- Dirty Cage Handling:** For dirty cage handling during chemical administration, and typically 72 hours beyond final administration, follow your RAR facilities guidelines. If you have any questions, please reach out to your Building RAR Supervisor.

Possible Consequences:

Failure to notify RAR staff of hazardous chemical use or follow safety protocols may result in loss of access to RAR services.