

Laboratory Safety Committee



Northern Illinois
University

Policy for Responding to Laboratory-Related Accidents or Incidents in the Academic Environment

Policy

The LSC is empowered to investigate laboratory accidents or incidents in academic contexts (e.g., research or teaching laboratories or facilities), which result in injury, the potential for injury, or property and/or product damage. Upon completion of an investigation, the LSC may issue recommendations to the Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships (VPRIPS) for further action.

Purpose

Incidents or accidents that occur in academic laboratories must be promptly and thoroughly addressed. The Laboratory Safety Committee (LSC) has the responsibility to:

- Identify the hazards and risks involved.
- Understand the circumstances of the incident.
- Debrief and educate participants in the incident.
- Recommend corrective actions to mitigate the risks and hazards.
- Identify mechanisms and procedures to prevent reoccurrence.

Procedure

The LSC may investigate any accident or incident that occurs in an academic context (e.g., research or teaching lab, field setting, studio) which results in injury, the potential for injury, or property and/or product damage. All accidents or incidents brought to the attention of the LSC will be reviewed. Those deemed within the jurisdiction of the LSC and warranting further inquiry will be investigated by the LSC. An investigation may also be initiated by a simple majority vote of the LSC members present at a hearing. Any accident or incident involving the closure of a laboratory will automatically be investigated. The Chair of the LSC may also initiate an investigation.

Investigation Process

1. Office of Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety (ORCIS) in conjunction with the chair of the LSC will identify an appropriate investigation team (hereinafter the Team) to carry out the investigation and report to the LSC. Generally, the Team will have at least three members with a member of LSC as Chair and include the Laboratory Safety Manager, the Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) representative, and one or more additional members of the LSC with expertise

relevant to the incident (i.e. those with knowledge of the discipline, the facility, the equipment, and/or the chemicals involved). The staffing of the Team can be modified as circumstances require.

2. The Team will be in contact with Public Safety, EH&S, the Dean of the relevant College, the Department Chair, the Laboratory Safety Liaison, the faculty member of the affected lab, all parties directly involved in the incident, and others as needed in the investigation. Based on the nature of the incident, and in discussion with the appropriate stakeholders, the Team has the authority to close the affected area in order to carry out the investigation.
3. The Team will review the incident site and any physical evidence; interview appropriate parties; review Laboratory Safety Plans and other written logs, notebooks, or other records; and take all appropriate steps necessary to complete their investigation into the nature of the incident, its causes, and contributing factors.
4. The Team may request support from the VPRIPS for outside experts to participate in the investigation as needed.
5. The Team will provide the LSC with a written report, which will serve as the basis for discussion of the incident and recommendations at a convened LSC meeting.
6. Actions could include:
 - a. None.
 - b. Recommendations for mitigation of incident with an appropriate timeline.
 - c. Closure of the laboratory pending further administrative review.
7. The LSC will ensure that the findings of the investigation and its recommendations are properly conveyed with a written report to the relevant and affected parties (e.g., faculty, staff, students, Chairs, and Deans).
8. The Team and the LSC will treat information regarding the incident as confidential and provide information beyond that provided in the report with discretion, on a “need to know” basis, and only to internal personnel. Information from the LSC and its investigation will be provided for external use through the VPRIPS.

Annual Review

The Laboratory Safety Committee will review and revise this procedure on an annual basis to reflect operational and procedural changes internal to the University as well as changes to applicable rule, and regulations and consensus standards.

Date	Reviewed by	Changes
10/30/2017	Lab Safety Committee	Initial
02/18/2022	Lab Safety Committee	Update