



Weill Cornell Medical College

# EHS News

## FDNY's Most Wanted – Is your laboratory in compliance?

Laboratories in NYC must be permitted by the NYC Fire Department (FDNY). EHS coordinates permitting and annual permit renewals, which includes an inspection by the FDNY. The following are the Top 10 most common violations the FDNY finds when visiting laboratories. Do your part to be proactive in preventing violations by reviewing the list and making changes when necessary. EHS is available to visit your lab and go over these issues.

### VIOLATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

- 1. Are flammable liquids stored only in flammable-proof or explosion-proof refrigerators/cold rooms?** Explosions, injuries and fires have started from storing flammable liquids in standard refrigerators / cold rooms. Remove all flammable liquids from standard refrigerators / cold rooms and store any flammables that must be refrigerated in flammable-proof or explosion-proof refrigerators / cold rooms.
- 2. Is the quantity of flammable liquids in the laboratory within the FDNY allowable limits?** The FDNY restricts the amount of flammable liquids that may be stored in a laboratory based on the FDNY Laboratory Type rating. Generally, laboratories are restricted to 25-30 gallons. If routine operations require an inventory of flammable liquids in excess of storage limits or if you need help determining the quantity of flammable liquids that may be stored in your lab, contact EHS for assistance.
- 3. Are all compressed-gas cylinders secured?** Unsecured cylinders could tip over, break their valve and become projectiles. Compressed gas cylinders (empty and full) must be secured at all times with a chain, strap, stand or cart.
- 4. Is all material stored below 18" from the ceiling?** If items are stored within 18" of the ceiling, they block the fire sprinklers from spraying water which extinguishes fires. Move items stored within 18" of the ceiling to another location.
- 5. Are all bottles containing chemicals or hazardous chemical waste stored off the floor?** People frequently trip over glass containers resting on the floor causing numerous chemical spills. Relocate chemical bottles to bench tops, shelves or cabinets.
- 6. Is a C14 Certificate of Fitness holder present at all times while the laboratory is in operation?** The FDNY requires that a C14 holder be present at all times while a laboratory is in operation. To obtain a C14 attend the EHS C14 training or apply at the FDNY in Brooklyn. More information is available here: <http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/fdny/index.html>
- 7. Are all C14's up-to-date?** The FDNY requires that C14's be renewed every 3 years. Renew your C14 60 days before expiration. More information is available here: <http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/fdny/index.html>.
- 8. Are excess combustible materials stored in a way that they do not create fire / emergency egress hazards?** Excess storage of combustible materials (e.g., cardboard boxes) creates fire / emergency egress hazards. Remove excess combustible materials and other debris from laboratories.
- 9. Are all corridors kept free of hazardous material storage?** Storage in hallways is prohibited as it creates a fire / emergency egress hazard. Move chemicals to approved storage locations inside laboratories or chemical storage rooms.
- 10. Are all peroxide-forming chemical containers properly labeled and are all expired chemicals disposed of?** Peroxide crystal formations may violently detonate when subjected to thermal or mechanical shock. Label and date all peroxide-forming chemicals with the "Date Received" and "Date Opened." Dispose of expired peroxide-forming chemicals. See the EHS Update on Peroxide-forming Chemicals available the EHS website for more information.

### Did you know . . .

Large (17 gallon) sharps containers are available as part of the sharps waste disposal program. These containers are ideal for collecting serological pipettes and prevent the tops of the pipettes from sticking out of the container. To request a large sharps container, use the comments section of the Sharps Collection Request Form which is available on the EHS website.



### You Asked. We Answered.

#### Household Disposal of Sharps and Medications

Patients may seek assistance disposing of old, expired medications and sharps (e.g., syringes, needles). Information is available to inform patients of the appropriate disposal programs available to them.

In New York State, the Department of Health provides a directory of official community sharps collection sites, most typically hospitals, nursing homes, or other healthcare facilities. Additional information relating to household sharps disposal programs in NY, NJ, and CT is available on the EHS website at: <http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/faq>. (Look for: How do I dispose of sharps at home?)

NY, NJ, and CT each recommend that prescription and over-the-counter household medications be discarded by patients in the regular trash rather than flushing them down the toilet to minimize water pollution. Additional information relating to household medication disposal in NY, NJ, and CT is available on the EHS website at: <http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/faq>. (Look for: What advice should I give patients about safe disposal of unwanted medications in their homes?)

Current newsletter available electronically at:  
<http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs/news>

646-WMC-SAFE (962-7233)  
[ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu)

## A Glance at EHS's Top Achievements for 2008

The year 2008 flew by and EHS wanted to take a step back and look at how we supported the College's mission of education, research and patient care. Here are some of our top achievements.

Do you have suggestions on areas where EHS can improve? Email EHS at [ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu).

### Emergency Planning

- Launched a new WCMC / NYP Emergency Website: <http://www.cornellemergency.org/>
- Expanded the WCMC Emergency Notification System to include all students.

### Fire Safety

- Implemented proactive measures to decrease fire alarms by **61%** over last year.
- Unveiled a new Fire Safety Manual in conjunction with providing hands-on Fire Safety Training to improve the WCMC community's knowledge of the building-specific fire safety procedures.
- Maintained an inventory of an average of **1,197** Fire Extinguishers.
- Issued **1,066** permits to contractors welding or doing work that could affect the fire alarm system in WCMC buildings.



### Customer Service

- Responded to over **462** calls requesting immediate assistance, some of which included: indoor air quality assessments, chemical spills, biological waste issues, and construction safety concerns.
- Replied to **1,041** emails to [ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu) requesting general information and / or assistance.
- Investigated **134** employee and student accidents and provided accident prevention recommendations.

### Laboratory Safety

- Coordinated **294** FDNY lab inspections for over **1,023** lab rooms and ensured **100%** resolution of violations.
- Collected chemical inventories for over **31,000** chemicals and reported to the NYC DEP Community Right-to-Know and the US Department of Homeland Security.
- Performed **572** chemical hood surveys and coordinated repairs with Engineering & Maintenance to decrease average repair time from **30** days at the beginning of 2008 to **6** days by December 2008.
- Performed **245** safety shower surveys.
- Posted **110** Health and Safety Door Signs.

### Biological Safety

- Reviewed **254** Biohazard and rDNA research Proposals.
- Conducted **188** risk assessments for research involving biological or chemical use with animals.
- Investigated and provided accident prevention assistance to **37** employees and students who had a needle stick injury.



### Waste Disposal

- Hazardous Waste: Received **620** collection requests to collect **4,962** containers (13.6 tons) within an average of **1.89** days of submittal.
- Biological (Sharps) Waste:
  - ❖ Labs: Received **1068** collection requests to collect **7,963** sharps containers (58 tons).
  - ❖ Clinics: Collected **2,136** sharps containers (7.7 tons).
- Universal Waste:
  - ❖ Recycled **3,636** lbs of florescent lamps/bulbs
  - ❖ Recycled **250** computer monitors
  - ❖ Recycled **142** computer CPU's
- Recycled **55** mercury thermometers and **24** mercury sphygmomanometers.



### Construction Safety

- Performed **283** Construction Site inspections and ensured **100%** of construction safety issues were resolved.
- Collaborated with Engineering & Maintenance and Security to increase coordination of off-hours construction work.

### EHS Safety Training Program

- Brought training out of the classroom and into your workplace which allowed EHS to tailor training to your specific safety needs. This year, we provided hands-on training to **676** WCMC faculty, staff and students over some of the following topics: Laboratory Safety, Chemical Hood Safety, Chemical Waste Safety, and Fire Safety.
- Added an EHS safety training component to the Human Resources New Employee Orientation that focuses on Emergency Preparedness, Fire Safety, Hazard Communication and Accident / Incident Reporting. In 2008, we trained **562** new employees through the New Employee Orientation program.

### Promotional and Administrative

- Created an EHS Pamphlet that provides EHS services and emergency contact information that was distributed to all WCMC faculty, staff and students.
- Issued the first EHS Newsletter which will be distributed at least twice per year.
- Received **61,526** visitors and a total of **1,110,060** hits to <http://www.weill.cornell.edu/ehs>.