

Reporting Unusual Research Hazards

Most research done on campus involves a fairly standard mix of chemicals, research animals, bacterial cultures, equipment, and the occasional low level radio labeled compound or laser. However, occasionally a project will involve the introduction of unusual hazards that may present a special challenge. Examples include: use of large quantities of reactive metals or flammable materials, exotic animal species, and toxins requiring a specific vaccine or antidote, and infectious agents requiring specialized treatment. Perhaps a piece of equipment needs special guarding or generates a lot of heat noise or UV radiation. There may be unusual applications of more familiar agents such as administering a test agent as an inhaled aerosol instead of injecting it or adding a material to a large volume of water for administration to an aquatic species.

If you have a project or activity that involves an unusual hazard or that may present a unique waste disposal requirement, please notify OH&S as soon as you are aware the event will take place on campus. By knowing of these potential hazards in advance, OH&S can coordinate emergency response and waste disposal measures. Also, we can assist in obtaining required permits and notifying appropriate agencies. Depending on the circumstances, the fire department, emergency room personnel or possibly Homeland Security may need to be informed.

Sometimes, typical research activities may need special precautions if the public is invited to observe, or an atypical group may be in the lab. School groups and open houses may warrant additional precautions since untrained visitors may be around hazardous materials or in sensitive locations.