OH&S Occupational Health and Safety

Safety Short

Building and Lab Storm Preparation

It's the time of year again, when severe weather can strike suddenly and with short notice. Tornado season is right around the corner! It can strike here and we must be prepared – at work and at home. Please take a few minutes to review the severe weather plans for your work area and learn what you should do to respond properly. The Emergency Information section of this web site has several articles on preparing for severe weather. Please, prepare before severe weather arrives.

Due to the possibility of inclement weather that Birmingham usually experiences during the Spring, the Department of Occupational Health and Safety has prepared a list of considerations for you, your building and your lab. Keep in mind that utility services may be altered or totally unavailable, including water, electricity, vacuum systems, steam and natural gas. Severe weather systems can cause conditions to deteriorate rapidly. Make your preparations now. The following list is developed to help you prepare your lab and building.

When severe weather is imminent, consider the following:

- ☐ Anticipate completing existing experiments to a termination point. Do not start any new experiments. Shut down equipment if hazardous conditions may result from loss of utilities (ie., loss of coolant, vacuum, steam for autoclaves).
- ☐ If you plan to complete experiments during the inclement weather event:
- ☐ Be prepared to provide your own basic necessities
- ☐ Be prepared to terminate experiments immediately if conditions deteriorate
- ☐ If you choose to stay in your lab or building either during off-hours or during University closure, it is highly recommended to contact UAB Police at 934-3535. Give them your name, building and room number.
- ☐ Plug any equipment that needs to run without interruption into the emergency power outlets. Red outlets are typically connected to emergency power. Avoid opening freezers and refrigerators to maximize cooling ability.
- ☐ Secure and protect valuable research samples, radioactive isotopes, biohazardous agents, recombinant materials and hazardous chemicals to prevent breakage and release.
- ☐ Secure and protect valuable building assets.
- ☐ Secure chemical, radioactive, and biological waste.
- ☐ If your building or lab uses Dewars make sure they are filled for critical sample storage.
- ☐ Securely store all select agents in double containment within approved facilities.
- ☐ Secure all other regulated materials.
- ☐ Confirm that arrangements have been made for the care of laboratory animals.
- ☐ Remove equipment, chemicals, wastes and supplies from the floor in areas that may flood.
- ☐ Breakable items or items that may become airborne in heavy winds should be moved away from outside windows.
- ☐ Ensure all gas cylinders are secure. Cylinders not currently in use should be capped and secured.
- ☐ If your building contains laboratory space with fume hoods instruct the users to close the sashes
- ☐ Unplug computers, printers, and all other electrical equipment (except refrigerators and freezers).
- ☐ Cover and secure or seal vulnerable equipment with plastic.
- ☐ Protect valuable files, research notebooks, and data to a safe secure location. Assist colleagues in securing their materials where possible.
- ☐ Back-up computer files, make more than one copy and store in several different locations.
- ☐ Check emergency phone numbers. Update emergency notification lists on lab doors. Add temporary contact information if staying in a different location.
- ☐ Take personal valuables home.
- ☐ Be sure you have your UAB ID with you at all times in case your building is on lock-down. Don't leave it at work.
- ☐ If there is ongoing disaster response in the area, do not attempt to enter. Check the status of UAB buildings by contacting UAB Facilities dispatch at 934-5353.
- ☐ Radioactive materials delivery may be suspended.

The UAB Inclement Weather hotline at 934-2165 and the UAB Website, http://www.uab.edu/emergency are official sources of UAB Information. Other emergency information for UAB is broadcast on WBHM and other local media.