

Safety Short – Release of Equipment for Moving

Periodically labs and their equipment must be relocated on campus. As the new buildings are completed, investigators move into new lab space. The vacated space is renovated and reoccupied. Each time a laboratory relocates; there is a need for properly packing materials and equipment for transport. Since most research involves some type of hazardous material, biological, chemical, or radioactive (and sometimes all three), it is important that precautions are taken to avoid exposing people or the environment to dangerous agents.

UAB has a team of movers who transport the bulk of the glassware and equipment in these lab transfers. Due to state and Federal regulations, the movers cannot transport hazardous materials unless they are received direct from the distributor in Department of Transportation approved packaging. This includes chemicals and biologicals repacked by lab personnel and all radioactive materials. It is also inappropriate for anyone to transport equipment containing or contaminated by any of these hazards.

Certain pieces of equipment, such as incubators, centrifuges, chemical fume hoods, and biosafety cabinets used with Class 2 biological hazards or any radioactive material require signs and stickers warning personnel of the hazard. Before this equipment can be moved, it must be decontaminated and a release tag attached. The Radiation Safety Manual and the Biosafety Manual outline the specific procedures for decontamination. Although there is no specific procedure for chemical decontamination, all visible contamination of any kind must be removed before transport.

Since moving personnel have no way of knowing a piece of tagged equipment is ‘clean’, they cannot move it unless the release tag is present. Even if a refrigerator used 20 years ago for radioactive storage couldn’t possibly have any residual activity, the proper release tag must be attached. Because movers can’t be sure of what a piece of equipment was used for, they are instructed not to touch anything that appears contaminated, or is labeled but not released.

To ensure that your equipment is moved on time, the following guidelines should be followed:

- As soon as you know you are moving, clean out all items that are no longer needed.
- If refrigerators, freezers or incubators need to be moved or stored, remove the contents and discard or store on dry ice or in coolers. Some of this may need to be done close to the time of the move.
- Thoroughly clean the item using an appropriate disinfectant (for biologicals) compatible with the equipment and effective against the organism stored. Remove signs and tape residue from the outside and notify Biosafety to have the items released.
- For items that have been used with radioactive materials, clean and survey with the appropriate equipment for the isotope and submit form to Radiation Safety.
- For items used with chemical hazards, clean using detergent and rinse completely.
- All equipment should be empty and reasonably clean.

Checklist for preparing equipment

- ☐ Using appropriate precautions and wearing appropriate PPE, remove all biological, chemical and radioactive materials from the item. Specimens and samples should be packed as waste, or stored appropriately for relocation.
- ☐ Clean all surfaces, interior, and exterior using detergent and or/contrad or similar decontaminating cleaner to remove chemical, radiation, and gross biological contamination.
- ☐ If disinfection is required, follow with a disinfectant effective against the agents used and compatible with the equipment surface. (Chlorine bleach is effective, but damages many materials.)
- ☐ Dispose of cleaning waste appropriately.
- ☐ Once the item is clean, conduct necessary surveys to complete release tag protocol.
- ☐ Remove any labels, signs, etc. and adhesive residue from the equipment that will not be required at the new location. (Moving personnel have no way of knowing whether the sticky tape was from a toxic warning sign or your lab's vacation schedule posted on the incubator.)
- ☐ Attach applicable release tags.
- ☐ Contact OH&S at 934-2487 for further assistance.