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EOHS GUIDELINE: 13-003

SUBJECT: Food and Drink in Laboratories

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013 revised 2025

GUIDELINE STATEMENT: All employees, faculty, students and other lab occupants or visitors are required to adhere to the guidelines established below with respect to the prohibition of food and drink in labs.

PURPOSE OF GUIDELINE: To maintain a safe academic and research environment; to ensure research integrity; and to comply with applicable health and safety regulations.

APPLICABILITY OF THE GUIDELINE: This guideline applies to all University of Akron faculty, staff, students, visiting minors and their sponsors as well as all guests and visitors.

GUIDELINES/PROTOCOL: Eating, drinking, chewing gum, applying cosmetics, taking medications, or similar activities in laboratories may result in the accidental ingestion of hazardous materials (chemical, radiological, biological). Therefore, these activities are strictly prohibited from all University Science laboratory spaces. Such activities are permitted in an area (*defined as a room with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door*) separated from the laboratory space. If a separate area can only be accessed by going through the laboratory, then only covered food or beverage items may be transported through the laboratory. These requirements help to prevent the ingestion of hazardous materials, which can occur by touching one's mouth with contaminated hands, eating with contaminated utensils, eating from a container that is contaminated, or eating food that has accidentally come into contact with hazardous materials.

In order to reduce the likelihood of ingestion of hazardous materials, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have incorporated "No Food or Drink" language into various regulations and safety manuals.

Besides prohibiting eating, drinking, chewing gum, applying cosmetics, taking medications, and other similar activities, there are additional actions or best practices that must be taken to help prevent exposure or ingestion of hazardous material(s):

- Wash your hands before handling anything (cigarettes, chewing gum, and food), which goes into your mouth. Wash your hands when you leave the laboratory.
- Use the water fountains for a drink--not a laboratory faucet.
- Remove gloves and wash your hands before using the water fountain or bathroom.
- Never use chemicals (salt, sugar, *etc.*) from the laboratory or stockroom on food.
- Never use laboratory glassware, as a food or drink container.

- Never store food or drink in a laboratory refrigerator or ice machine.
- Never consume ice from a laboratory ice machine.

REGULATORY REFERENCE(s):

OSHA Laboratory Standard ([29 C.F.R. 1910.1450, Appendix A](#))

(d) Eating, smoking, etc.: Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, or application of cosmetics in areas where laboratory chemicals are present; wash hands before conducting these activities.

Avoid storage, handling, or consumption of food or beverages in storage areas, refrigerators, glassware or utensils which are also used for laboratory operations.

OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard ([29 C.F.R. 1910.1030 \(d\)\(2\)\(ix\) and 1910.1030\(d\)\(2\)\(x\)](#))

1910.1030(d)(2)(ix)

Eating, drinking, smoking, applying cosmetics or lip balm, and handling contact lenses are prohibited in work areas where there is a reasonable likelihood of occupational exposure.

1910.1030(d)(2)(x))

Food and drink shall not be kept in refrigerators, freezers, shelves, cabinets or on countertops or bench tops where blood or other potentially infectious materials are present.

"Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (BMBL) 6th Edition", U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health, [Sixth Edition](#), Aug 2025:

Standard Microbiological Practices for Biological Safety and Animal Biological Safety levels 1, 2, 3, and 4:

Persons must wash their hands after working with potentially hazardous materials and before leaving the laboratory.

Eating, drinking, smoking, handling contact lenses, applying cosmetics, and storing food for human consumption must not be permitted in laboratory areas. Food must be stored outside the laboratory area in cabinets or refrigerators designated and used for this purpose.

AREAS AFFECTED:

- All laboratories or research facilities.

ENFORCEMENT:

As with all policies and guidelines affecting the use of hazardous materials and laboratory safety, enforcement of these guidelines is the responsibility of the Primary Investigator responsible for the laboratory. Teaching professors/instructors/staff are responsible for their assigned teaching laboratories and neighboring preparatory locations.

CONTACTS:

Questions related to this Protocol:

- Director of Environmental Occupational Health and Safety (EOHS):330-972-6866

DEFINITIONS:

- Laboratory: means any building or part of a building used or intended to be used for scientific or technical work and that may be hazardous, including research, quality control, testing, teaching or analysis.

Attachments: None

Reviewed and Approved by: Vice President of Facilities and Capital Planning

Vice President of Campus Safety

Office of the Provost

Vice President for Research

Office of General Counsel

Environmental Occupational Health and Safety