



Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety
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EOHS GUIDELINE: 17-01
SUBJECT: Unattended Experiments

EFFECTIVE DATE: 04/05/17

GUIDELINE STATEMENT: All employees and faculty are required to adhere to the guidelines established below with respect to conducting unattended experiments in laboratories.

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.

GUIDELINES/PROTOCOL:

If a running experiment or equipment in a laboratory will be left unattended during the day and/or will be continuing overnight, an **Unattended Experiment Notice** must be completed. Unattended experiments must be failsafe as determined and approved by the Primary Investigator. Failsafe provisions must also be in place when leaving equipment such as power stirrers, hot plates, heating mantles, and water condensers unattended.

The Unattended Experiment Notice will ensure that Emergency Response Personnel will have the necessary information to respond to an incident, should it occur. In the event of a disruption of building services identified on the Unattended Experiment Notice as necessary to the experiment, attempts will be made to notify the individual(s) responsible for the experiment ("Experimenter"); however, the ultimate responsibility for monitoring the experiment belongs to the Experimenter. Attempts to contact the experimenter may be attempted by the appropriate staff of the University.

It is the Experimenter's responsibility to design the experiments to prevent the release of hazardous substances in the event of interruptions in utility services, such as electricity, cooling water, and flow of inert gas. The Primary Investigator has ultimate responsibility for all activity within his or her research area. The Experimenters are responsible for reviewing the experiment with, and obtaining approval from, the Primary Investigator prior to submitting the Unattended Experiment Notice.

SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS:

The Experimenter shall submit the Unattended Experiment Notice to the Primary Investigator for approval. Once approved, the Experimenter shall forward the completed form to unattendedexperiments@uakron.edu.

- Complete, print out, and post a copy of the Unattended Experiment Notice on the laboratory door.
- The Safety Data Sheets for the chemicals involved must have been entered into the University Chemical Database.

- The experimenter should make arrangements for other workers to periodically inspect the operation.
- Materials not involved in the experiment shall be removed from the hood to avoid having them become involved in a fire or other incident, should one occur.
- The Unattended Experiment Notice must be completely filled out, including 24-hour phone numbers for:
 - The Experimenter.
 - The Primary Investigator.
- Always show an experiment "ending date" on the form. If the experiment extends beyond the scheduled ending date, complete and forward a new Unattended Experiment Notice.

The nature of the hazards, etc. must be explained when any "hazards" are identified on the form (e.g., reactive when exposed to air, corrosive to mucous membranes, pyrophoric, etc.)

Special instructions should be written clearly. Hazardous substances used must be listed.

Any reaction that represents an unusual or extreme hazard shall NOT be left unattended.

AREAS AFFECTED:

- All laboratories and research facilities.

ENFORCEMENT:

Enforcement of these guidelines is the responsibility of the Primary Investigator/Faculty responsible for the laboratory. Teaching professors/instructors/staff are responsible for their assigned teaching laboratories and neighboring preparatory locations.

If it is discovered that the Unattended Experiment has not been approved, the Primary Investigator, lab supervisor and experimenter will be notified to shut down the experiment.

CONTACTS:

Questions related to Unattended Experiment Protocol and execution of the Notice:

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

DEFINITIONS:

- Failsafe: designed to return to a safe condition in the event of a failure or malfunction.
- 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:

- Unattended Experiment Notice

Revised 2025