SAFETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Our Mission

The University of South Carolina is committed to providing a safe work environment, free of recognizable hazards. Furthermore, it is the policy of the University to comply with all applicable state and federal standards, codes and regulations, including the occupational safety and health standards established by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Responsibility for Safety

Department chairs, heads of offices, directors of programs, laboratory directors, principal investigators, managers, supervisors, foremen, etc. are responsible for the health and safety of individuals engaged in activities under their direction or supervision. They must ensure compliance with all relevant regulations and accepted standards and that work activities are performed in a safe and considerate manner.

Each employee is responsible for complying with the applicable provisions of health and safety standards and regulations. They also must adhere to all University and departmental safety policies and procedures and comply with safety directives issued by their individual supervisors.

Department of Environmental Health and Safety

The mission of the Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) is to provide health and safety services to the University community through technical support, information and training programs, consulting services, and periodic auditing of health and safety practices and regulatory compliance. EHS consists of University employees working in a coordinated effort to address and help resolve health and safety issues in the University community. The areas of expertise include general safety, chemical safety, radiation safety, biosafety, contractor safety, fire safety and environmental quality issues.

General Safety refers to safety, rather than health exposures, and covers a wide variety of topics involving office safety, laboratory safety and general shop safety.

Chemical Safety refers to the recognition, evaluation and control of health hazards related to use of chemical and physical agents.

Radiation Safety provides services related to two general types of radiation safety: (1) ionizing radiation emitted by radioactive materials and machine sources of radiation, and (2) non-ionizing radiation, including ultraviolet, microwave, radio-frequency and electromagnetic frequency emissions.
Biosafety includes services related to recognition, evaluation and control of microbiological hazards.

Contractor Safety provides service designed to evaluate and monitor contractor’s performance for regulatory compliance on safety and environmental related topics during related construction activities performed for the University of South Carolina.

Fire Safety provides services designed to reduce the risk of loss of lives and property from fire. This includes recognition and mitigation of fire hazards, ensuring proper functioning of fire suppression and alarm systems, providing recommendations for new building design, and employee training.

Environmental Quality issues addressed by EHS include hazardous waste management, underground storage tanks, drinking water quality and air quality.

Departmental Safety Managers

University departments or functional units should appoint a Departmental Safety Manager to act as a liaison between the department and EHS. Individuals may contact the Department Manager or their supervisor to determine who acts in this role in their department or functional unit.

The Departmental Safety Manager has responsibility for oversight of health and safety within the department and is a principal contact for faculty, staff and students to address health and safety issues or concerns. The Departmental Safety Manager works with faculty, management and supervisory personnel in the department to identify potential hazards associated with their operations and activities. The main objectives are to clearly identify and understand safety responsibilities, while providing the means and authority necessary to carry out those responsibilities.

Departmental Health and Safety Profiling

The myriad of health and safety regulatory requirements makes compliance a difficult proposition. To assist departments in determining which regulatory requirements or other safety programs apply to their specific circumstances, EHS has developed a safety profiling system. The profiling process includes a joint, systematic review of departmental operations and activities by EHS staff and department representatives.

The product of this effort is a listing of safety programs that are relevant to the particular needs of the department. As a result, management is better able to focus on legitimate departmental safety issues and, with assistance from EHS, begin the process of setting priorities for developing and improving specific safety programs. The information generated from the profiling process can be used in conjunction with the relevant sections...
of the Safety Guide to acquire a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Department, EHS, Facilities, and others in the overall University safety effort.

The safety profiling procedure can be applied to an entire department or to a functional area within a department. The profiling process is applicable to both academic and non-academic departments.

**Procedure**

- **Departmental Safety Manager** and/or other representatives meet with EHS staff and respond to a series of questions based on the activities or operations that occur within the department or departmental subdivision being profiled.
- Department representatives review responses to verify the applicability of specific safety programs to the operations in their department.
- Department conducts self-audits of existing programs to determine strengths and weaknesses.
- Department compiles list of needed actions to initiate or improve safety programs. Action items are prioritized and specific tasks are assigned (develop an action plan). EHS is available to assist Departments in this step.
- EHS conducts periodic comprehensive evaluation of the Departmental safety program.

Additional information about Departmental safety profiling, including the Departmental Health and Safety Profile form and the Safety Program Guide, is available through EHS. A copy of the OSHA Job Safety and Health Poster, required to be posted in each department, is available from EHS.

**University Health and Safety Committees**

**Health and Safety Oversight Committee**

The Health and Safety Oversight Committee has the following charges:

- Review, support, and amend health and safety policies for the division and make new policy recommendations as appropriate;
- Review specific health and safety complaints of employees, request investigations by EHS staff, and support staff efforts to gain cooperation in implementing recommendations;
- Review training programs and assist in providing support to EHS staff in meeting regulatory requirements through these training programs;
- Review safety audits, work related injuries, illnesses, and assist staff in affecting needed changes in the environment; and
- Act as an oversight committee to the Radiation Safety Committee, Biohazard Committee and Infection Control Committee.

**Radiation Safety Committee**
The Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) oversees the University's radiation safety program, grants authorization to principal investigators and other senior staff members who plan to work with radioactive materials, reviews incidents involving radioactive materials, sets policies for the use of sources of radiation and gives general supervision to the implementation of those policies.

Biohazard Committee

The Biohazard Committee is responsible for the review and oversight of research activities in the life sciences. The purview of the Committee includes all activities involving artificially recombinant DNA and use of other potentially biohazardous materials. The committee also has authority and responsibility for infectious waste management, adoption of a written protocol for management of infectious waste from generation to disposal, and implementation of a quality assurance program to monitor on site treatment procedures. The committee defined its role as including review of the program for the management of exposures to infectious waste, particularly to blood and body fluids.

Raising Safety Concerns

The responsibility for safety at the University of South Carolina is discussed at the beginning of this section, as well as in the Health and Safety Manual. Faculty, staff and workers play an important role in ensuring a safe and healthful workplace at the University of South Carolina.

Individuals with specific safety questions or concerns are encouraged to raise them with their immediate supervisor or their Departmental Safety Manager. Dealing with safety issues through the supervisory chain of command is the preferred method; however, when this approach is unsuccessful in resolving a safety issue, concerns may be raised by direct contact with an EHS staff member. EHS staff will, on request, keep the name of a complainant confidential; however, in some instances, this constraint may prevent thorough investigation and resolution of a complaint.

Federal labor law prevents an employer from discriminating against an employee for engaging in certain "protected activities", such as filing of safety complaints with the South Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Administration (SCOSHA). Although employees have the legal right to file an OSHA complaint, they are encouraged to first exhaust all internal mechanisms for addressing safety issues, including supervisory staff, Departmental Safety Managers and safety committees or EHS.