

Dear Colleagues,

The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (VSFPC) places SEVERE limitations on hazardous chemicals that can be used in the buildings at UVA. If the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) enforces these regulations the result will be to severely limit the chemicals that are used in teaching and research labs both here and at all state institutions of higher education.

In April 2011, the SFMO conducted an inspection of some of the research laboratories in Jordan Hall and found that the amounts of flammable chemicals present were beyond the limits described in the VSFPC. Their greatest concern was the apparent lack of concern for safety and proper management of chemicals (i.e. poor housekeeping).

Since the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) has developed an excellent working relationship with the SFMO over the years, they asked EHS to develop and implement a management and inspection program to improve the safety of chemicals. We MUST eliminate the lab occupant created problems if we hope to convince the SFMO that we are managing chemicals in a manner that ensures safety.

EHS has provided the SFMO with details of our plans and procedures, but ultimately it is the responsibility of each laboratory to operate in a safe manner. The criminal charges brought against a faculty member at UCLA following the death of a person in their laboratory should make each Principal Investigator (PI) concerned about how their laboratories are operating. To assist you in improving your laboratory's safety (and to help us prove to the SFMO that we operate in a manner which provides the equivalent level of safety to operating with a very restricted quantity of chemicals), I have asked EHS to assist each lab. Please pay attention to their recommendations.

Sincerely,



Thomas C. Skalak
Vice President for Research

The following is a list of items that the SFMO noted in their earlier inspections:

1. Establish the minimum quantity (in gallons) of flammable chemicals needed to conduct research in each room. EHS will collect this information when they visit your laboratories. This amount will be used to designate a hazard classification (A-D, A = highest hazard, D = lowest hazard) as described in the National Fire Protection

Association (NFPA) 45: Standard on Fire Protection for Laboratories Using Chemicals. This letter will replace the number 0-4 in the red diamond in the NFPA Fire Diamond on your door sign. (This is in lieu of making you provide inventories for emergency responders.

2. Laboratories will no longer be allowed to purchase 5 gallon cans of solvents.
3. All empty bottles must be defaced and remain capped at all times. Dispose of defaced bottles ASAP.
4. Store all hazardous materials properly.
 - a. Make sure that all gas cylinders (empty or full) are secured properly at all times.
 - b. Segregate and store incompatible chemicals in separate locations. The most common problem is the mixing of acids, bases, and flammables.
 - c. Store hazardous chemicals in proper storage cabinets (specifically, acids, bases, and flammables). EHS personnel will help you identify safe storage practices.
5. Items that must be kept cold need to be stored in refrigerators or freezers approved for such storage (explosion proof).
6. EHS provides a database of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for chemicals and chemical products found at the University (<http://ehs.virginia.edu/msds/>). Please create a shortcut to this information on your computer desktop for easy access as OSHA requires that each person in the lab have easy access to this information.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Suzanne/Suzy Arnette at smp5m@virginia.edu or 243-1727.