



Food and drink policy for biology laboratory classrooms

Adopted Fall 2017

Background

Federal regulations prohibit the storage and consumption of food and drink in areas exposed to toxic materials. Toxic materials are substances that “constitute a recognized hazard that is causing or is likely to cause death or serious physical harm.” Federal regulations also prohibit the consumption of food and drink where there is potential exposure to blood or infectious material.

The relevant federal regulations include 29 CFR 1910.141(g)(2) and 29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(2)(ix).

Interpretations of these regulations by OSHA include the following modified statements (to include applicability to students).

The institution must evaluate the laboratory space to determine in which locations food or drink may potentially become contaminated and must prohibit employees and students from eating or drinking in those areas.

An institution may determine that a particular ... location is separated from laboratory areas subject to contamination and therefore is so situated that it is not reasonable under the circumstances to anticipate that occupational exposure through the contamination of food and drink or their containers is likely. The institution may allow employees and students to consume food and drink in that area...”

In light of the above regulations and interpretations, the need to protect employees and students from dangerous exposures, and the need to maintain a reasonable workplace free from unneeded and onerous restrictions, the following policy has been adopted.

Food and drink policy statement

Instructors, other employees and students may keep food and drink inside the laboratory classroom provided that all of the following conditions are met:

1. The food and drink must be placed inside another container, termed a secondary container, such as a bag, backpack, or box.
2. The food and drink must remain in the secondary container while inside the classroom.

3. The food and drink, inside a secondary container, must be placed in a location that is not currently or regularly used for the storage or manipulation of toxic materials, blood, or infectious materials; examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. A drawer or cabinet that is used to hold office supplies or books, but does not contain any toxic materials, blood, or infectious materials.
 - b. A desk drawer that is used for paperwork, but is not used for the storage or manipulation of toxic materials, blood, or infectious materials.
4. The consumption of food and drink occurs outside the laboratory classroom in clean areas; examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. The 2100 building main corridor
 - b. The break room and hallway adjacent to 2124
5. The food and drink must remain inside the secondary container while inside the lab classroom, including during the time when the employee or student is in transit to and from a clean area while carrying the food and drink.
6. The food and drink containers must not leak materials that may pose a nuisance by attracting insects, rodents and other pests or by otherwise disrupting the smooth operation of the laboratory classroom.
7. The food and drink containers must be removed by the employee or student when she/he exits the laboratory classroom for the day, or prior to when another instructor commences teaching in the laboratory classroom, whichever occurs first.

References

https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=INTERPRETATIONS&p_id=27425

[https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9790#1910.141\(g\)\(2\)](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9790#1910.141(g)(2))

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