Harvard Forest Working Alone and Working After Hours

Laboratory Policies

Prudent Practices in the Laboratories by the National Research Council states “Generally it is prudent to avoid working alone at the bench in a laboratory building. Individuals working in separate laboratories outside of working hours should make arrangements to check on each other periodically… Experiments known to be hazardous should not be undertaken by a worker who is alone in a laboratory. Under unusually hazardous conditions, special rules may be necessary.”

The following policies apply to work in all laboratories and lab related spaces at the Harvard Forest.

**Laboratory Working Hours** are defined as the hours of work from Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. All other times are considered “after hours.”

**Working Alone** is defined as being in a laboratory setting without the knowledge of another person(s). During laboratory working hours, if you are alone in the lab, make sure you are in audible range of someone.

When possible, schedule all laboratory work during normal working hours. Workers should perform their work in accordance with written, defined experimental procedures. In cases where it is necessary to work after hours and/or alone, you may do so in consultation with your supervisor or project PI. Try to avoid any procedures that involve hazardous chemicals after hours. It is the responsibility of the supervisor or project PI to ensure that all laboratory workers working under her/his supervision have properly been trained in guidelines to minimize risk, injury, and ensure safety. This training includes:

- Successfully completing the “Harvard Forest Lab Safety Orientation Review” and other necessary safety training (as determined by supervisor)
- Knowledge of safe procedures and practices
- Knowledge of Emergency Protocols (found in the Emergency Response Guide)
- Contact information of person(s) for non-emergency situations

*Updated 03/23/12 by Manisha V. Patel*
Additional Requirements:
Individuals under the age of 16 are not allowed to work in the laboratory alone during laboratory working hours, and are not allowed to work in the laboratory at all after hours under any circumstances. Minors (between the ages of 16 and 18) and undergraduate students are subject to an additional requirement before being allowed to work in the laboratory after hours:

- An after hours check in/check out procedure must be instituted for minors (individuals between the ages of 16 and 18) and undergraduates.

The details of such a procedure will be determined by the individual’s supervisor and/or project PI working in consultation with the laboratory manager. The supervisor and the project PI are responsible for working with the laboratory manager to determine the check in/check out procedure. Note that check in/check out can be reported via telephone, text message, email, or other agreed-upon means.

In the event that an individual subject to a check in/check out procedure does not check out by 9:00pm, the following steps will be implemented:
1. The designated contact person will attempt to reach you via the pre-determined mode of contact. If you cannot be contacted,
2. The designated person will contact the Lab Manager.
3. The Lab Manager will send someone to your lab location to verify your whereabouts.
4. If you are not in the lab, and cannot be located, the Lab Manager will call the police to locate you.

Although all other users of the laboratory do not have to follow the check in/check out procedure, it is highly recommended that you also institute such a procedure.

Any individual who must work alone or work after hours in the laboratory must complete the Harvard Forest Working Alone and Working After Hours form, and return it to the Lab Manager.