

University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual	EH&S Guideline Number: 03-007	
Subject: LAB INSPECTIONS	Effective Date: 03/01/2008 Review Date: 03/12/2025	Page 1 of 2

LABORATORY SAFETY SURVEY PROGRAM

The Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) strives to support the core laboratory research and teaching mission of the University of Pittsburgh. EH&S conducts a comprehensive laboratory inspection program to ensure that work within laboratories is occurring safely and in compliance with applicable laws, guidelines and University procedures. EH&S coordinates the inspection of all University laboratories. Inspections are conducted for new investigators upon their arrival at the University.

Principal investigators (PI) are the key to research safety programs. The PI is responsible to train and supervise lab workers, and to ensure that the conduct of workers and research is compliant with all safety and health standards. The lab inspection program aids the investigator in providing education and advice. The inspection focuses on ensuring:

- All workers are aware of the risks associated with the work in the lab, including animal hazards, physical hazards, biological hazards, and chemical hazards.
- All workers are trained on how to mitigate those risks, through facility design, engineering controls, safe work practices, and protective equipment.
- Workers comply with regulatory requirements, such as potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens or other infectious materials, and storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous chemicals

Specifically, the lab inspection covers the following items:

- Laboratory security
- Personnel training and documentation
- Laboratory safety design
- Hygiene and personal protective equipment
- Laboratory practices
- Sharps safety
- Chemical storage, handling, and disposal
- Spill and infection control
- Biological safety cabinets, fume hoods and other containment equipment
- Biological and chemical decontamination and waste disposal
- Animal experiments

The lab inspection process begins when the lab inspector contacts the PI to schedule the inspection. It is recommended, but not required, that the PI responsible for the laboratories accompany EH&S on the inspection. If the PI is not available, the individual accompanying EH&S on the inspection should be familiar with all of the work occurring in the laboratories. To prepare for the inspection, the EH&S laboratory inspector reviews the PI's Institutional Animal Care and Use (IACUC) protocols and recombinant DNA protocols to better understand the work occurring in the lab.

EH&S utilizes a standardized laboratory inspection checklist during the inspection. The lab inspector visits all the labs used by the PI, including shared laboratories, such as shared cell

University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual	EH&S Guideline Number: 03-007	
Subject: LAB INSPECTIONS	Effective Date: 03/01/2008 Review Date: 03/12/2025	Page 2 of 2

culture rooms. The lab inspector communicates all recommendations verbally during the inspection. Concerns that require follow-up may be handled by the lab inspector or forwarded to other qualified EHS staff.

A written inspection report is sent to the PI and the lab contact shortly after the inspection. As necessary, copies of the reports are forwarded to the department chairperson, department chemical hygiene officer, and/or respective Dean. The report includes a summary of the work that is occurring in the PI's labs and on the PI's research protocols. The report includes a summary of the recommendations for improved lab safety. "Critical action items" generally include items related to regulatory requirements such as biological and hazardous chemical waste disposal, safe handling of biohazards, work with animals, and handling of safety equipment. "Opportunities for improvement" include other items that may not be an immediate safety concern but warrant further examination by the PI. The report includes a completed copy of the inspection checklist.

On occasion, extremely critical safety hazards are identified on laboratory inspections. In such cases, EH&S will perform a prompt follow-up, and seek or oversee corrective action. If a condition is identified as posing a severe imminent hazard to safety or health, the operation can be suspended by EH&S and the University's administration after consultation and approval by the Dean of that particular school, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences, or the Executive Vice Chancellor.

After the inspection, the lab inspector may return to the laboratory to verify that recommendations have been implemented and also provide additional follow-up for special projects, such as the use of safety engineered sharps devices. If the scope of the laboratory work changes significantly, such as an increase in the biosafety level of the laboratory, EH&S will conduct another inspection.