

Laboratory Decommissioning Procedure

Researchers are required to follow this Laboratory Decommissioning Procedure prior to vacating any laboratory or other space where chemical, biological, or radioactive agents have been used or stored. Events requiring decommissioning of a laboratory include:

- Terminating affiliation with The University of Memphis
- Relocating to another laboratory space
- Major laboratory renovation
- Retirement from research pursuits

The principal investigator (PI) is fully responsible for complying with all laboratory decommissioning requirements. In the event of death, disability, abrupt termination of employment, or other unplanned event, the department chair becomes responsible for implementing the decommissioning procedure. Department chairs are additionally responsible for oversight of the decommissioning procedure and for certifying that a vacated laboratory space has been properly decommissioned. Researchers who are vacating shared spaces shall ensure that this procedure is implemented for their portion of the lab space.

Departments may incur significant costs as a result of laboratories that have not been properly decommissioned. Departments are responsible for any deficiencies not corrected by the Principal Investigator. Any regulatory actions or fines resulting from improper management or disposal of any regulated material may also accrue to the department.

Step-By-Step Instructions

Hazardous Materials - Remove chemical, biological, and radiological agents prior to decommissioning. Be aware that numerous restrictions apply to the transfer of hazardous materials; EH&S provides consultative assistance in the lawful transfer of these materials.

- **Chemicals** – Coordinate chemical waste disposal with EH&S at least 14 days prior to the move. Unopened and uncontaminated chemicals can be returned to departmental stockrooms, transferred to temporary storage, or redistributed among colleagues.
- **Compressed Gas Cylinders** – Transfer to willing recipient, return to vendor, or dispose of as chemical waste.
- **Biologicals** – Dispose of biological wastes, potentially infectious materials, and sharps according to University policy. Liquids can be decontaminated and poured down the drain.
- **Radioisotopes** – Dispose of as waste or transfer to another authorized user.
- **Controlled Substances** – Dispose of as waste or transfer to another qualified and licensed individual.
- **Select Agents** – Strict federal regulations apply to the destruction and/or transfer of Select Agents. Contact EH&S for guidance.

Remove Stored Items - Remove all glassware, laboratory research apparatus, empty containers, and other equipment. Storage areas, cabinets, and fume hoods must be completely emptied prior to decommissioning.

Clean and Decontaminate – Clean and decontaminate all laboratory surfaces, including those in fume hoods, biosafety cabinets, and chemical storage areas. General cleaning and chemical decontamination can be accomplished by washing with warm, soapy water. Further decontamination may be necessary for:

- **Biologicals** – Areas that may have been exposed to spills can be decontaminated with 1:10 bleach solution or other suitable disinfectant.
- **Radioisotopes** – Surfaces must be decontaminated to the levels specified in the UofM Radiation Safety Manual. Document removal of surface contamination with wipe tests.
- **Equipment** – Decontaminate all accessible surfaces. Affix Equipment Release Form to equipment that will be shipped or sent to Surplus.
- **Biosafety Cabinets** – Wipe down all accessible surfaces (including the spill pan) with a suitable disinfectant. Some agents may necessitate a formaldehyde gas decon of the filter and inner surfaces; contact EH&S for guidance.

Inspection – Schedule decommission inspection with Department Chair. All deficiencies must be corrected before the laboratory can be certified as decommissioned.

Recordkeeping – Department Chair retains original Decommissioning Form, with one copy to the PI, one copy to EH&S, and one copy prominently posted in the decommissioned area.

Exceptions - In situations where it is impractical or unwarranted to remove all stored items, including chemicals, the department chair and PI may agree to make exceptions to this requirement. Exceptions shall be documented on the exceptions page, signed by both parties, and posted with the Decommissioning Certification Form.