



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Safety in a Research Laboratory

Author(s)

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Year

2000

Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about laboratory safety; namely, what a person should do when her coworkers are not practicing good safety habits.

Body

You are a new researcher in this laboratory, and part of your job is to prepare and run polyacridamide gels. You read the descriptions of the hazardous reagents involved in this procedure, and find that the ethidium bromide used to stain the DNA is a strong carcinogen. You also notice that acetone (a component of nail polish remover) was listed as a dangerous substance, and should never be breathed or touched. As you are working, you notice several other employees touching the gels containing ethidium bromide and then touching faucets or door handles and see people disposing of the gels in the garbage instead of into the collection jar in the hood.

What, if anything, should you do?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

Adapted from a project by Gwen Crevensten.

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Discipline(s)

Engineering
Life and Environmental Sciences
Research Ethics

Publisher

Online Ethics Center