

# Winthrop University - Safety in the Chemistry Laboratory

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The Department of Chemistry, Physics, and Geology at Winthrop University makes every effort to provide a safe learning environment for the chemistry student. All laboratory experiments are checked for safety when performed according to the directions. **STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR READING ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR PERFORMING EACH EXPERIMENT BEFORE COMING TO LAB.** Part of the educational program in chemistry is to learn how to handle potentially hazardous materials in a safe and efficient manner. As with any activity where there is the potential for a serious accident, the fundamental responsibility lies with the individual. The principle effort in conducting a safe laboratory program is thorough preparation and constant vigilance. **WHENEVER THERE IS ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE SAFETY OF A PROCEDURE OR WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN, ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR BEFORE BEGINNING THE EXPERIMENT.**

The following rules will be strictly enforced. If you violate these rules, you will be asked to leave for the safety of the other students. You will not be allowed to return or complete the lab assignment at a later date.

- Always wear safety goggles. It is your responsibility to provide department approved safety goggles. Chemical splash goggles (NOT GLASSES) are required. Goggles must be worn by everyone, including those who wear eyeglasses or contact lenses. The bookstore sells the appropriate goggles.
- It is poor personal hygiene to share eye protection.
- The American Chemical Society Committee on Chemical Safety has studied and reviewed the wearing of contact lenses in the laboratory. They recommend that contact lenses can be worn in most laboratory environments provided the same approved eye protection is worn as required of other workers in the lab. If you wear contact lenses in the lab, your instructor will give you a colored sticker to place on your goggles indicating that you are wearing contacts.
- Open-toe shoes are not allowed. Closed-toe shoes, preferably leather, that cover the entire foot are required for each lab. If you come to lab with the wrong shoes, you will have to leave.
- Avoid loose clothing that could become caught in equipment or easily knock over containers.

- Rubber aprons are available in the general chemistry labs and must be worn while working in the laboratory.
- No eating, drinking, or tobacco use in the laboratory. Also, be sure to wash your hands prior to leaving lab for the day.
- Cell phones and music players are not allowed in lab. If you must answer your cell phone in lab, wash your hands before handling the phone.
- "Horseplay" and unauthorized experiments are strictly forbidden
- Pull back long hair, especially around flames and caustic chemicals.
- Learn the location of all safety equipment such as eyewash stations, safety showers, fire blankets, and fire exits before beginning work in the laboratory.
- Keep aisles and exits clear. There are areas designated for storing bookbags. Do not store your bookbag on the floor.
- Close your lab drawer after removing laboratory equipment.
- Practice good housekeeping; leave the lab cleaner than you found it. Clean up small chemical spills immediately. For larger spills, notify your instructor immediately.
- Return equipment and chemicals to the appropriate storage area when you are finished using them.
- Be sure to inspect glassware before using. Discard any glassware that is cracked, chipped, scratched or has any other obvious defect.
- Discard broken glassware in the broken glass container in the front of the lab.
- Do not insert glass tubing into a rubber stopper without advanced training. There is special equipment that should be used in order to minimize the risk of injury.
- Never leave an open flame or rapid reaction mixture unattended. In the event of a fire, turn off your Bunsen burner and exit the building.
- Always add acids to water never water to acids.
- Keep substances with irritating fumes under your fume hood at all times.

- Return caps and lids to all reagent bottles immediately after use. Don't assume the next person will do that for you. If you remove it, put it back.
  - Never return reagents to stock bottles. This contaminates the stock and may cause a violent reaction.
  - Dispose of unused or contaminated reagents in labeled containers as directed by the instructor. Do not put any chemicals down the drain unless otherwise directed by your instructor.
  - Use extreme caution when testing odors.
  - Never pipet by mouth. Always use a rubber bulb.
  - Report any accident to your instructor immediately.
  - Never work alone in the laboratory.
  - If for any reason your instructor feels that your safety is in jeopardy or that you are jeopardizing the safety of others, you will be asked to leave the lab. You will not be allowed to return to make up missed work and you will receive a zero for that day's work. You will not be allowed to return to future labs until the situation is corrected.
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# Laboratory Etiquette

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- Other students use the workspace and equipment that you use in this laboratory. Always leave your workspace clean. Laboratory instructors can deduct penalty points for poor housekeeping. There are detergents for glassware, hand soap and paper towels available at each workstation.
  - In addition, much of the equipment is usually quite expensive. Treat the equipment with care. Balances are especially sensitive, expensive devices. Never weigh chemicals directly on the pan. Corrosive materials can damage the steel pan. Use a container such as a beaker or flask. Remove the container from the balance, add the chemical, and then replace the container on the balance. If you spill anything on the balance, please notify the instructor immediately.
  - If you find a piece of equipment that is not in good working order, notify your instructor immediately.
  - When working with "community reagents", take an appropriate size container to the front lab bench, and pour the appropriate amount of reagent into your container. Be sure to follow the correct procedures (see below) for obtaining chemicals from a stock bottle.
  - Never lay reagent bottle stoppers or caps on the lab bench. The entire reagent may become contaminated. In addition, the residue on the bench may be hazardous and linger for days or weeks. This could injure someone well after the fact. Hold the stopper in your other hand while you get the material out of the bottle. Replace stoppers immediately and completely.
  - Many chemicals have strong or toxic odors and should be used in a fume hood only. For example, acids and bases can be particularly hazardous. If you are not sure, be on the safe side and use your hood.
  - Cell phones and music players are inappropriate in lab.
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## Accidents and Accident Prevention

There are many potential hazards that exist in the laboratory. The best way to deal with such hazards is to prevent accidents from happening. The following are some guidelines for dealing with and preventing the more common accidents. When in the laboratory, use common sense, pay attention to what you are doing, and be alert as to what is going on around you.

- For any type of accident, notify your instructor immediately.
  - If you are attempting to assist someone, do not become a victim yourself. Wear safety glasses and gloves to prevent direct contact.
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## Accidents

### A. Chemical Exposure and/or Burns

#### 1. Chemicals on the Skin in Confined Areas

- Immediately flush the area with cool water for at least 15 minutes. Remove all jewelry to facilitate removal of any residual material.
- Have someone else notify your laboratory instructor.
- Seek medical attention
- If a delayed reaction is noted, report immediately for medical attention and explain carefully what chemicals were involved.

#### 2. Chemicals Spilled over a Large Area of the Body

- The person should immediately head to the nearest safety shower.
- Notify an instructor- Treat as a life threatening emergency. Call -911 or 323-3333.
- Once in the shower, rinse first, and then remove clothes taking care not to spread chemicals especially into the eyes.
- Wash head and remove clothing before removing goggles.
- Flush skin for 15 minutes, and seek immediate medical attention.
- If a fire blanket is available it can be used as a shower curtain for someone using the safety shower and then used to keep someone warm while waiting for emergency help to arrive.
- Avoid putting anything on the affected area; it may worsen the condition and cause irritation.
- Send MSDS with the injured person

### 3. Chemicals in the Eyes

- Get the victim to an eyewash station immediately, and rinse the eyes for at least 15 minutes.
- Eyelids have to be forcibly opened to ensure effective washing behind the eyelid.
- Remove contact lenses as soon as possible so that the eye can be thoroughly rinsed.
- Get medical attention immediately. All eye injuries must be treated at the Crawford Health Services.

### 4. Ingestion of Chemicals

- Identify the chemical ingested
- Call -911 immediately

#### B. Chemical Spills

- Turn off all sources of ignition.
- Notify individuals in the area of the spill.
- Notify your instructor immediately of the spill and the chemical that was spilled.
- If any injury is involved, and it can be done safely, attend to injured or contaminated persons, and remove them from exposure.
- Do not attempt to clean up the spill yourself. Your instructor will determine what needs to be done in order to clean up the spilled chemical.

#### D. Fires

- If possible, turn off all sources of ignition.
- Notify everyone else in the laboratory.
- **Notify your instructor immediately and send someone to find another faculty or staff member.**
- If a person is on fire, help them drop to the floor and roll, or take them to a safety shower.
- If the fire is spreading quickly or you are unsure as to what to do, evacuate the area and pull the fire alarm.
- Do not attempt to put the fire out yourself.

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## Prevention

### A. Accidents

- Keep your workspace clean of clutter.
- Do not store any items on the floor of a laboratory, i.e. book bags. There are storage areas provided.
- Keep the sinks clear of waste. No solids of any kind ever go into the sink.
- Do not work with chipped or broken glassware.

- There are specially marked containers for all broken glass. **Do not throw glass in a trashcan.**

## **B. Fires**

- The best way to handle fires is to prevent them.
  - The following is a list of some of the things you can do to help prevent fires from starting:
    - Keep your work area free of clutter
    - **Never leave a Bunsen burner unattended** and always turn off the gas when finished. Even if you plan on using the Bunsen burner again during the lab period, always turn the gas off after each use.
    - If the fire bell rings while you are working, **turn your Bunsen burner off** and exit the building calmly.
    - Never use an open flame to heat a flammable liquid.
  - When working with an open flame, keep your hair pulled back if it is long and watch that your clothing does not catch fire. Do not wear long, loose fitting clothing.
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