

Texas Tech University Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry
Safety Committee Meeting
20 January 2012

Members Attending:

Justo Adame, David Birney, Rachel Behrens, Amanda Boston, Dominick Casadonte, Garrett Mohr, Brandon Mount (EH&S), Sunil Paladugu, Jon Thompson, Bruce Whittlesey
Absent: Yunli Hu, Jared Martin, Paul Paré, Geneva Peterson, Lian-Jie Xue

The meeting was begun at 13:02.

Agenda Item 1: Announcements

Peer Safety Evaluations:

Dom Casadonte reminded everyone to continue peer laboratory safety inspections.

Communications and Process:

Communications need to be improved between the departmental safety committee, the university safety committee, and EH&S. Dom Casadonte has met with Dimitri Pappas (Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry representative to the university safety committee). Dom is now a member on the university committee, and Dimitri will be included as a recipient of minutes, emails, agendas, etc.

Institutional Laboratory Safety Committee Report:

Dom Casadonte will chair a five person committee to look into laboratory hazards (definitions and recommendations).

A TTU Health Sciences Center faculty member would like to do research into developing a vaccine for SARIN poisoning. This research would involve preparation of a compound that is the penultimate product in the synthesis of SARIN. The committee recommended that this be done at an army facility that is better equipped to handle the compound safely (eg. Dugway Proving Ground). A TTU procedure needs to be developed to identify when and how hazardous chemicals are introduced to the TTU campus.

University of California at Los Angeles Lawsuits and Arrests:

The UCLA professor involved in student death in the laboratory has been charged with a criminal offense potentially punishable by up to 4 ½ years in prison. This emphasizes the seriousness of safety issues on campus.

University of Florida Accident:

A laboratory at the University of Florida has experienced a third accidental explosion in as many years.

University Chemical Waste Policy:

Dom Casadonte asked if there was any comment or suggestions with regard to the hazardous waste disposal policies circulated to the committee via email several days ago. David Birney pointed out that the “Prudent Practices in the Laboratory” book recommends that acids and bases free of heavy metal waste should be disposed of by neutralization, dilution, and then disposal down the drain. This procedure is not recommended in the policy that was circulated, and Prof Birney proposed that carrying out this procedure could have averted recent spills in which acid waste sprayed out of a waste bottle in a fume hood. Justo Adame pointed out that other chemicals (eg. bleach or ammonia cleansers) might be in the drain system at the same time, and that this could cause an adverse reaction. A discussion followed concerning the best way to dispose of solutions and solvents in the laboratory. Brandon Mount (EH&S) said that this aspect of the waste disposal policy is under review in their office. Amanda Boston reported that there has been a problem in the past with corrosion of metal waste disposal drums that contain organic solvent waste, especially with chlorinated compounds, and it was recommended that these no longer be used. There was a question as to whether flammable solvent waste should be stored in the fume hood or the flammable storage cabinet.

Amanda Boston has been investigating the purchase of “Circumvent Caps” for solvent waste bottles that can vent if vapor pressure builds up. The TTU Department of Environmental Health & Safety will look into this.

Agenda Item 2: Undergraduate Members of the Committee

The committee gave approval for Dom Casadonte to invite two undergraduate students who have expressed interest to serve on the TTU Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry Safety Committee (CBSC).

Students doing research in computational chemistry will NOT be exempt from the normal safety training required for all graduate students.

Agenda Item 3: Goal Setting for the Upcoming Year

Members of the Department of Theatre and Dance will assist the department in training teaching assistants in accident response (acting out realistic scenarios).

Garrett Mohr recommended that we look into ways to improve communications between the committees, departments, and laboratory personnel involved in research safety at the university.

Rachel Behrens recommended that a single web site be developed for disseminating safety information.

David Birney recommended that we come up with recommendations for revisions to the university chemical hygiene plan. He proposed that special attention be paid to issues in which the current hygiene plan does not conform to recommendations in “Prudent Practices in the Laboratory”, one example being column chromatography on the lab bench.

We will begin working out drills and procedures for emergency evacuation of the Chemistry Building. Bruce Whittlesey will contact Carol Korzeniewski and the Emergency Action Coordinators to set this in motion.

Agenda Item 4: Safety Notes: What should be included next?

Need to have a reminder sent out for safety training for new people.

Agenda Item 5: Old Business

Re: previous meeting minutes

Aluminum backed TLC plates should also be disposed of in the glass trash receptacles.

Agenda Item 6: New Business

None

Agenda Item 7: Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 3 February 2012 at 13:00 in Chemistry Room 305.

The meeting was adjourned at 14:05.