



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY™

Office of the President

MEMORANDUM

To: The Texas Tech University Community

From: Guy Bailey *Guy Bailey*  
President

CC: President's Advisory Council  
Deans  
Department Chairs

Date: October 19, 2011

Re: The U.S. Chemical Safety Board report on the Jan. 7, 2010, serious laboratory accident in Chemistry and Biochemistry

As you will recall, there was a serious laboratory accident on Jan. 7, 2010, in the chemistry and biochemistry department here on campus. A Ph.D. student was badly injured. The accident prompted an investigation by the U.S. Chemical Safety Board. It has completed an extensive investigation and is issuing its report Wed., Oct. 19, at 11:30 a.m. CDT via a webinar hosted through its website (see [http://www.csb.gov/investigations/detail.aspx?SID=90&Type=1&pg=1&F\\_All=y](http://www.csb.gov/investigations/detail.aspx?SID=90&Type=1&pg=1&F_All=y)).

We have worked closely with the U.S. Chemical Safety Board throughout its investigation. We intend to become an exemplar in our campus climate and culture around laboratory safety. We have come a long way since 2010. However, as you also know, another laboratory accident occurred last week in chemistry and biochemistry, and this means that we have much more to work on as we move forward.

We are launching our own website about the accident, our response, the findings of the U.S. Chemical Safety Board, and recommendations that we are imposing on ourselves. This website can be found at [www.CSBresponse.ttu.edu](http://www.CSBresponse.ttu.edu). This website is intended to remain live for up to five years, and we will add information as we achieve the changes mandated by the Chemical Safety Board and as we change our safety culture. We invite other universities and the public to learn about our progress.

I want to take a brief moment to share with you our self-imposed recommendations that will complement those being suggested by the U.S. Chemical Safety Board. These are as follows:

1. Adapt elements of physical risk into our chemical hygiene plan.

*While our current plan is focused on reducing human health risk from exposure to chemicals, it does not yet adequately address physical risks to human health (e.g., explosion, fire, electric shock).*

2. Require Texas Tech University (TTU) to become an exemplary institution around the culture of safety.

*We wish for others to learn from our mistakes and the programs, policies and procedures that we have implemented since the accident. We think that can be done under our focus on responsible conduct of research. This focus can be further tied to our regional accreditation quality enhancement program around ethics.*

3. Require the University to report annually to the U.S. Chemical Safety Board about progress made toward improving the culture of laboratory safety; the reporting parameters will need definition.

*We feel that we should spend, at least, the next few years and perhaps as many as five years working toward further improving our culture and compliance. We feel it is important to be held accountable at the highest levels in the institution for our improved performance and should be obligated to inform the U.S. Chemical Safety Board annually as to our progress. The identification of actual parameters to report will likely include information on accidents, training, response to inspection surveys, adherence to important protocols like appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and adoption of practices as measures by annual reporting at various levels (faculty, chair, dean, college and institution). These parameters will need to be refined in concert with deliberative bodies, including the newly established Faculty Chemical Safety Committee (see 4).*

4. Establish a TTU Faculty Chemical Safety Committee to help firmly establish the culture of laboratory safety.

*We are well served by faculty-led regulatory committees that govern our research involving animal subjects, human subjects, biological hazards, or radiation. A similar model may prove an effective means of engaging faculty in an advisory role to senior leadership and the research and teaching community about best practices in laboratory safety, proactive hazard analysis, compliance reporting, usefulness of laboratory surveys, and investigator accountability for laboratory procedures. We would like to implement such a committee here at TTU.*

5. Acquire an online chemical inventory system.

*We would be well served by having a modern, facile approach to inventorying all chemicals on campus. Such a system should be beneficial to researchers, environmental health and safety, and first responders.*

6. Require the Provost and Vice President for Research to make laboratory safety an element of annual evaluations (e.g., college, department, faculty).

*We believe that the annual review process may be an excellent way to compile useful information about the change in culture and in the degree of compliance. This can be done at various levels. We would look to the Faculty Chemical Safety Committee and other deliberative bodies and experts to serve in an advisory role as this recommendation is further defined. As a first step, pages have been added in Digital Measures to capture faculty activities in responsible conduct of research and safety for 2011 Faculty Annual Reports.*

7. Others to be determined.

*We expect that as the Faculty Chemical Safety Committee examines the U.S. Chemical Safety Board report, other recommendations may come forward for consideration.*

On behalf of this institution, I ask for your support to change our culture and make a difference about safety in our laboratories, studios and research sites on a daily basis. This is very important, and I look to each of you to help me make this institution an exemplary one. Thank you.