To: Deans, Chairs, Department Heads, Directors  
From: Thomas Perez, CIH  
Director, Office of Environmental Health and Safety  

Subject: Chemical Inventories  
Date: November 3, 2009

As you may have heard, a fire occurred this past August in the Biological Sciences Building. Two labs were totally gutted and the Principal Investigator lost virtually all of his research and the majority of his equipment. Property loss was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the loss of research is immeasurable.

Thankfully, no one was injured and the fire was contained to the two rooms. To their credit, the Wayne State Police and the Detroit Fire Department (DFD) responded quickly to the fire alarms. One thing the DFD asks for, especially when responding to a fire in a research building, is a chemical inventory. This information is critical for the firefighters to quickly assess the situation and determine possible risks when entering a burning lab. This particular lab had a chemical inventory, but it was posted in the room where the fire was, so it was not accessible.

Some of the questions the DFD needs answered during such an emergency include:

1. Are there flammable liquids (alcohols and other solvents) or oxidizers present that may accelerate or feed the fire?
2. Are there any toxic chemicals that may pose a health threat (respiratory exposure, skin exposure, etc.), which may require specialized personal protective equipment or a specific decontamination procedure when removing fire gear?

It is critical for each lab to have an inventory to help answer these questions. The inventory will also help you and your staff track what you have in stock, and stay in compliance with state health and safety regulations. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) require you to have a chemical inventory that is updated annually (at a minimum). We would like the following information included on your inventory:

1. Full chemical name of material (or trade name, if purchased as a reagent)
2. Name of manufacturer (for example; Sigma-Aldrich, JT Baker)
3. Amount in lab (mg, g, kg, ml, L) – approximations are fine if you are not sure

If a chemical inventory is available, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) will be collected and given to the emergency responders. Entry into a room can be accomplished faster, saving research, property, and possibly, lives. We ask that you supply OEHS with an electronic copy of your inventory. A copy will be given to the WSU Police Department and a copy will be retained in our office for emergencies. Please comply with our request for chemical inventories during our laboratory safety inspections. Email inventories to: i.iban@wayne.edu.

---

1 MIOSHA regulation, Part 431 Hazardous Work in Laboratories, Rules R325.70107(3)(e) & R325.70109(1)(b)