

IACUC Policy #:	400
Policy Title:	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Policy</i>
Date Approved:	May 4, 2017
Date Reviewed:	November 15, 2023
Who should be informed	Principal investigators, personnel, and researchers manipulating animals

Purpose:

The purpose of the policy is to specify requirements for risk assessment and physical examination to ensure that principal investigators, personnel, and researchers are adequately protected against potential unintentional injury or illness caused by work with vertebrate animals and cephalopods.

Definitions:

Researcher: In addition to principal investigators and other personnel, the term researcher also includes volunteers and/or students approved to complete research in the designated protocol.

Policy:

Federal regulations require that institutions establish and maintain an occupational health and safety program (OHSP) as an essential part of the overall program for animal care and use¹. The OHSP includes a hierarchy of controls as described by OSHA², and consists of three parts: engineering controls that specify appropriate design and operations of facilities and use of appropriate safety equipment; administrative controls that include standard operating procedures and policies; and finally personal protective equipment.

Engineering controls are established during planning, construction, and maintenance of facilities on campus, including facilities used to house or handle vertebrate animals and cephalopods. Proper maintenance of animal use areas is inspected by IACUC at least every six months as part of the semiannual facility inspection. Administrative controls – policies and procedures – are established and reviewed by the IACUC regularly. Necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) must be provided by the Principal Investigator, with proper instruction as to use and upkeep of equipment.

Principal investigators, personnel, and researchers enter the OHSP by completing a medical history and risk assessment form; taking the completed form to a medical professional who completes a physical exam (preferably at Student Health Service on campus), and returning the completed and signed risk assessment form to the Laboratory Animal Program. Principal investigators from peer research universities may be eligible to submit enrollment forms from their institutions. The Laboratory Animal Program does not keep any private medical information. The risk assessment form is reviewed by an occupational health and safety expert;

thereafter, the employee is sent information regarding the specific risks of his/her work, including methods to reduce risk and eliminate unintentional injury. The physical exam and risk assessment must be completed every six years.

A separate policy regarding animal work with particularly hazardous substances, such as carcinogens, mutagens, teratogens, hazardous chemicals, and hazardous biologic agents has been developed and implemented by the IACUC (see IACUC Policy 410). Additionally, any animal work at biosafety level 2 or 3 must be approved by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) prior to animal work beginning. The IBC specifies safety equipment and procedures specific to particular biohazards before their approval. Any animal work utilizing radioisotopes must be approved by the Radiation Safety Committee prior to animal work. CEHS advises safe handling procedures, proper waste disposal, and appropriate emergency response to employees working with hazardous chemicals, biological agents, and radioisotopes.

Of particular concern to the IACUC is the prevention of allergies to animals or animal products, which may result in respiratory impairment, including asthma. SIUC has a respiratory protection program administered through the Center for Environmental Health and Safety. For animal workers, this program is voluntary. Fit testing for respirators is provided for those employees whose risk factors include significant exposure to animals, defined as four or more hours per week. Fit testing can be performed at Student Health Services at the time of the physical exam, or at CEHS. Respirators are provided at no charge to the employee by the Principal Investigator.

References

Public Health Service. (2015). *PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. National Institutes of Health Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare.
<https://olaw.nih.gov/policies-laws/phs-policy.htm>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration. *Laws and Regulations*. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs>