

Laboratory Safety Advocate Program

Environmental Health & Safety Plan LS-005

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1. Purpose

The laboratory safety advocate program is a robust network of departmental and unit representatives who advocate for and facilitate communication and a positive safety culture. This document establishes the roles and responsibilities associated with the Laboratory Safety Advocate program.

2. Scope and Applicability

The Laboratory Safety Advocate program shall apply to all University of Tennessee, Knoxville academic departments and other organizational units (e.g., centers and institutes) that conduct research, academic instruction, or other activities in laboratories, maker spaces, studios, and academic shops that fall under the oversight of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Environmental Health and Safety Department.

3. Definitions

- **LSA:** Laboratory Safety Advocate. An individual appointed by unit leadership to assist the unit in managing laboratory safety for the unit and to promote laboratory safety culture.
- **Laboratory:** Wet or dry laboratory, maker space, studio, or academic shop, individually or in combination, where research, academic instruction, or related activities occur.
- **Unit:** Department, center, institute, or other organizational entity served by a Laboratory Safety Advocate.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Environmental Health and Safety, in partnership with the Laboratory Safety Committee, college representatives, and unit leadership, is responsible for implementing and maintaining the Laboratory Safety Advocate Program.

4.1 Environmental Health and Safety

- Maintain a roster of Laboratory Safety Advocates (LSA) and coordinate assignments with units.
- Maintain and provide written procedures, records, and other documentation for the Laboratory Safety Advocate program.
- Provide programmatic training and technical guidance to LSAs.
- Establish and maintain communication methods to inform and update LSAs, including safety requirements, training announcements, operational changes, lessons learned, and other information that may affect the laboratory community.

4.2 Laboratory Safety Committee

- Ensure that all assigned LSAs are appointed to the committee and receive committee-related communications regularly.
- Evaluate the broad needs for sustaining an effective LSA program and make recommendations to EHS, college representation, and unit leaders.
- Serve as a forum to review, discuss, and advise on laboratory safety practices, accidents/incidents/near misses, laboratory safety reviews, unit safety concerns, regulatory updates, or other topics that may impact LSAs and the units that they serve.
- Support LSAs in their role as a safety advocate for their unit.

4.3 College Representation

- Collaborate with EHS, department leaders, and LSAs in their college to sustain and improve laboratory safety.
- Initiate and support college-level efforts related to safety in coordination with the college dean.
- Utilize the LSAs from their college to assist with communication and resolving matters related to college initiatives to improve safety, and/or improvements related to ongoing processes such as facilities and infrastructure, laboratory safety inspections, unit-level student-led safety committees, or other safety-related initiatives.

4.4 Unit Leadership

- Appoint, empower, and support the unit's Laboratory Safety Advocate.
Considerations for appointing the LSA include:
 - Possessing one or more of the following attributes: 1) professional seniority, 2) professional rapport with unit faculty, 3) familiarity with department operations, and 4) technical knowledge in one or more of the unit's disciplines.
 - Sufficient time allocation to fulfill the LSA programmatic responsibilities year-round. Time allocations are at the discretion of unit leadership and may vary depending on LSA status (faculty, staff, etc.).

- More than one LSA may be appointed per unit, if necessary, provided that the unit leader ensures all roles and responsibilities are addressed and that parallel efforts maintain comprehensive coverage.
- Work with LSA to ensure that unit laboratory safety obligations are communicated, prioritized, and addressed, including commissioning and decommissioning activities, laboratory safety inspection reviews, and laboratory incident management.
- Provide unit-specific methods for the LSA to communicate laboratory safety announcements (e.g., unit email distribution list, faculty meetings, individual meetings, etc.).
- Inform the LSA of any unit laboratory safety needs or concerns that need to be discussed with EHS and/or the Laboratory Safety Committee.

4.5 Laboratory Safety Advocates

- Disseminate and communicate safety information from EHS and the Laboratory Safety Committee to personnel in the unit, including pertinent procedures, guidelines, hazard inventory requests, training requirements, or safety bulletins.
- Work with academic or research faculty and staff in resolving safety questions or raising concerns to appropriate authorities.
- Work with responsible academic or research faculty to ensure that potential safety hazards, exposures, accidents, injuries, illnesses, spills, releases, near misses, or other regulatory and environmental issues are reported to EHS.
- Liaise with laboratory commissioning and/or decommissioning in conjunction with unit leadership by notifying EHS whenever:
 - New PIs or researchers join the department, institute, or center.
 - PIs or researchers leave the department, institute, or center.
 - PIs or researchers will be relocating their laboratory spaces.
- Partner with EHS in incident/accident/near miss investigations and convey investigation reports and lessons-learned to unit and stakeholders.
- Represent the unit at scheduled Laboratory Safety Committee and applicable college meetings. As appropriate, discuss safety concerns, incidents, remedial actions, lessons-learned, or best practices.
- Provide, or coordinate, technical or subject matter expertise for EHS or the Laboratory Safety Committee.
- Partner with unit leadership to establish methods for routine communication.
- Advocate for a strong safety culture by promoting safety and acting as a positive role model.

5. Training and Communication

Laboratory Safety Advocate orientation will be provided by EHS. The training will include an overview of this program document, relevant laboratory safety standards, operational guidelines, and other supporting information.

6. Records and Documentation

Laboratory Safety Advocate Roster — EHS — 1 year retention/SharePoint.

Document Control Statement

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Revision History

Summary of Changes

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Author/Office
1.0	04/19/2021	Initial release	Lab Safety Services
2.0	08/18/2025	Updated roles and responsibilities	Research & Academic Safety
3.0	07/15/2026	Updated roles and responsibilities	Research & Academic Safety