

Date: June 26, 2008
To: IC Scientific Directors
From: Deputy Director for Intramural Research
Subject: Appropriate Laboratory Clothing and Mandatory Use of Personal Protective Equipment

During a recent campus-wide regulatory inspection, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found evidence of inappropriate dress in the laboratories and failure of laboratory personnel to use appropriate personal protective equipment (lab coats, protective eyewear, etc.). The NIH was found in violation of several OSHA standards and violations were issued with required abatement dates (dates by which corrective action must be implemented).

Please note that the present policy found in our Chemical Hygiene Plan (August 2007) is designed to protect the health and safety of all NIH workers. These are not new requirements, and they apply to all intramural laboratories and animal areas. Instructions to personnel are explicit:

Protect your clothes and exposed skin by wearing laboratory coats and gowns. Open-toed shoes, sandals, shorts, and other apparel that leave skin exposed are not appropriate when handling potentially hazardous chemicals. Laboratory coats must not be worn outside the laboratory.

In addition, protective eyewear must be used when working with, or in proximity to, potentially hazardous materials (chemical, radiological and biological).

Each SD will engage the IC Safety Committee to assist in monitoring compliance with these policies. Occupational Safety and Health Specialists from the Division of Occupational Health and Safety, ORS are available to assist.

I also remind each of you that the summer students who are working in your laboratories are to be provided with, and instructed to use, appropriate personal protective equipment. We have a responsibility to be good examples for our summer students as they form their work and safety habits for the future. Our highest priority is the safety of our NIH laboratory staff.

Michael M. Gottesman, M.D.

cc:

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