

Safety Bulletin

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Minimum protective laboratory attire

UW Safety policies require the following are worn in chemical laboratories:

- Lab coat that fits well and is compatible with lab hazards present
- Eye protection that protects from splashes and projectiles
- Closed-toe shoes that cover the top of the foot and resists liquids or sharps
- Shirts that cover the arms and upper body
- Lower-body clothing that protects exposed skin to the ankle

Proper laboratory attire is always in fashion

It may be “cool” to wear shorts, tank tops and open-toed sandals -- but not in chemical laboratories. The UW Chemical Hygiene Plan prohibits sandals and other open-toed footwear where chemicals are used. Likewise, large areas of skin are exposed if short shorts or skirts are worn. Exposed shoulders and upper arms are also discouraged in laboratories.



More clothing recommendations:

- **Wear comfortable shoes.** Walking and standing in uncomfortable shoes can leave feet tired and sore.
- **Socks** add padding for your feet and protection to your ankles.
- **Avoid synthetic clothing, that can melt if ignited.** Wear less flammable natural fibers, such as cotton. Various sizes and types are available to researchers through the UW Lab Coat Program.
- **Do not wear loose clothing.** Large cuffs and folds can knock things over, get caught in machinery, or drag through flames or chemicals.
- **Wear clothing that breathes.** Cotton or other natural fibers keep from overheating.
- **Don't wear your favorite clothing.** You might not even know that splatters or droplets are on your clothes, but stains or holes may show up the next time you do laundry.
- **Come prepared to change clothes.** Keep your lab clothes in a locker or bag and change from your regular clothes before lab. It is also good to have spare clothes for emergencies.
- **Avoid wearing valuable jewelry** while working in the lab. Chemicals may be capable of damaging jewelry. Loose jewelry can snag on clothing or knock things over.
- **Tie back long hair.** Long hair can fall into flames or chemicals. Many hair sprays and gels are flammable. Loose hair can also block your vision.

Safety Is Everybody's Job

References for proper attire in the chemical laboratory

Prudent Practices in the Laboratory - National Research Council, 2011:

"Clothing that leaves large areas of skin exposed is inappropriate in laboratories where hazardous chemicals are used. The worker's personal clothing should be fully covering. Appropriate laboratory coats should be worn, buttoned, with the sleeves rolled down."

"Unrestrained long hair and loose clothing such as neckties, baggy pants and coats are inappropriate in a laboratory where hazardous chemicals are in use. Such items can catch fire, be dipped in chemicals and get caught in equipment. Similarly, rings, bracelets, watches or other jewelry that could be damaged, trap chemicals close to the skin, come in contact with electrical sources or get caught in machinery should not be worn. Leather clothing or accessories should not be worn in situations where chemicals could be absorbed in the leather and held close to the skin."

Safety in Academic Chemistry Laboratories for Students, American Chemistry Society, 2004:

"Clothing worn in the laboratory should offer protection from splashes and spills; it should be easily removable in case of accident and should be at least fire resistant." "In the laboratory, wear shoes with uppers made of leather or polymeric leather substitute. Do not go barefoot or wear sandals. Do not wear shoes that have high heels or open toes, uppers made of cloth, woven leather strips or other woven material. Shorts, cutoffs and miniskirts unnecessarily exposure your skin to potential corrosives, which are not safe. Constrain long hair and loose clothing. Do not wear jewelry such as rings, bracelets and wristwatches in the laboratory."

Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories - CDC/NIH:

"This publication describes the combinations of standard and special microbiological practices, safety equipment, and facilities constituting Biosafety Levels 1-4, which are recommended for work with a variety of infectious agents in various laboratory settings." "Safety equipment includes biological safety cabinets (BSCs), enclosed containers, and other engineering controls designed to remove or minimize exposures to hazardous biological materials. Safety equipment also may include items for personal protection, such as gloves, coats, gowns, shoe covers, boots, respirators, face shields, safety glasses, or goggles."

Laboratory Safety Standard, OSHA, 29CFR 1910.1450:

"Protective laboratory practices and equipment are available and in common use to minimize the potential for employee exposure to hazardous chemicals." "Protective laboratory practices and equipment means those laboratory procedures, practices and equipment accepted by laboratory health and safety experts as effective or that the employer can show to be effective, in minimizing the potential for employee exposure to hazardous chemicals."