

## To the research community: procedures for labs when campus is closed

Please be advised of university policies in the event of a campus emergency closure situation such as a winter storm that is severe enough to jeopardize the safety of the campus community.

### Overview

When the university decides to close, all university faculty, staff, and students must leave campus and remain away until the university reopens. No one should remain in offices or laboratories or continue to work. For several reasons, researchers working in a lab could significantly increase risk of hazard or injury:

- During times of campus closure there are fewer people available to hear a call for help or to assist in times of trouble. **No one should ever work alone in a lab.**
- Fume hoods and biosafety cabinets used to protect researchers do not operate during power outages and may suddenly go off, which could cause an exposure to hazardous material.
- There may be limited emergency personnel available to deal with a lab emergency, both because of other ongoing emergencies and because roads and access routes may be impassible.

While the campus should be able to maintain power to most areas, and Physical Plant does everything they can to ensure it, there may be periods of short or more extended campus power outages and other effects. In addition, there could be significant off-campus impacts for the campus community that could prevent access to campus for a period of time.

Prior to a potential closure, principal investigators, lab safety coordinators, and lab staff should take steps to:

- protect research
- ensure facilities remain safe

- make sure everyone knows what and what not to do during and after a campus-closing event.

**Preparations should begin ahead of forecasted events:**

- Identify and make a plan for any research materials that are temperature sensitive. Inquire within your department, school, or college for the availability of backup power for freezers and incubators.
- Fill Ziploc freezer bags with water and put them in -20°C freezers. This will help keep freezers cold in case of an outage. The bags can also be moved to refrigerators to keep items cold.
- Fill liquid nitrogen dewars so that they do not need to be tended to for a few days.
- If possible, change cell culture media a little ahead of schedule so that cells can be left unattended for a few days.
- Autoclave bio-hazardous waste the day before a potential closure.
- Do not place orders for perishable research materials.
- Inform **Environmental Health and Safety at 413-545-2682** if the storage or containment of any materials could become hazardous with lack of power or ventilation.
- Ensure that the contact information on your lab door card is current; include a cell phone number wherever possible. Make neat corrections if needed.
- Ensure chemicals and other hazardous materials are properly stored. Be aware of potential for flooding, especially if your lab is on a lower level, and lift chemicals to the bench.
- Ensure that computers and other non-critical equipment are turned off and unplugged prior to an event, as power bumps could occur that

may damage equipment.

- Prepare a list of contact numbers and campus resources for lab staff.

### **When the campus issues an emergency closure statement:**

- Secure laboratories and research areas so that they remain safe if you are unable to return for a day or two.
- **Lab personnel should not remain working in laboratories.** Principal investigators are responsible for the safety and security of their lab personnel and therefore should not require or encourage personnel to remain on campus during a university closure.
- Make sure lab doors are closed and locked.
- **No experiments should be left running that could potentially create hazardous situations.** For example, no heating oil baths are to remain running due to the risk of fire. Because of the uncertainty of access to buildings during and immediately after the storm, there is a possibility that researchers may be unable to get back to their labs to monitor and/or take care of ongoing experiments.
- Look for campus email and text messages for updates on the campus status and availability of bus transportation

### **When you come back to campus:**

- Carry your ID in case you are asked for identification by university police.
- Make sure someone knows where you are on campus.

Animal Care Services (ACS) makes arrangements to ensure staff are onsite and available despite severe storm conditions. Concerns regarding animal care should be brought to the attention of **ACS director Paul Spurlock at 413-545-5268.**