

For Immediate Release
15 November 1995

FINAL RREPORT OF THE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TASK FORCE

The University expresses its appreciation to the members of the Accident Investigation Task Force for the excellent job they have done.

The Task Force's Final Report is primarily concerned with recommendations related to the improvement of safety. All of its recommendations have been implemented. A copy of the Report is attached for reference purposes.

1. **Detection of hazards**

A systematic effort was launched in the days immediately following the chemical spill to detect any physical hazards that might have remained in the laboratories. A news statement, released on 9 June 1995, enumerated seven areas of action undertaken (see attachment).

2. **Alarm System**

As was announced earlier, the alarm from the Emergency Ventilation system has been reconnected to the Security Control Centre. A system of audible local alarms is now under tender.

3. **Air Handling System**

Since the air-handling system works most efficiently when the air-conditioning is turned on, a "laboratory needs" study was conducted and a new schedule for the air-conditioning system was established. A distinction between laboratories that need air-conditioning 24-hours a day, for safety reasons, and others was made.

4. **Dangerous Goods Storage**

Chemistry laboratory areas have been checked to ensure that unnecessary quantities of chemicals are not being kept in the laboratories. All surplus chemicals in the dangerous goods category have been removed to the dangerous goods stores. The Chemistry Department is now in the process of establishing a Dangerous Goods Store, closer to their laboratories, that can meet their most immediate needs.

5. **Training and Procedures**

Specific on-the-job training has been added to existing safety courses. Training programs have begun and will be on-going.

6. Handling of Minor Chemical Spills

The emergency procedure sections of the safety manual have been revised with input from heads of departments and departmental safety officers to ensure that the revised procedures can be easily implemented.

7. Departmental Safety Programs.

Programs for laboratory safety have been reviewed and revised, in consultation with departmental heads, with a view to ensuring that existing mechanisms are in place to maximise laboratory safety.

8. Mission and Focus of the Safety & Environmental Protection Office (SEPO) and Office of Laboratory Services (OLS)

The Task Force's recommendation that the primary mission of SEPO must be to make the University environmentally sound and physically safe has been affirmed. The activities of the office are directed towards the achievement of that objective. A committee has been established to review OLS.

9. Enforcement and Compliance

SEPO offers advice on the adoption of appropriate safety measures, performs a monitoring role to establish that satisfactory practices are observed and has the power of enforcement, including the authority to close laboratories should SEPO consider that necessary. This role has been explicitly separated from the managerial responsibility for ensuring that all activities in a department are conducted according to best safety practices. Accountability for safety compliance resides, through line management, with the head of the department concerned and this has been made clear.

Note to Editors:

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