

July 9, 2020

Subject: FDNY Laboratory Inspections Resuming – Please Read

Principal Investigators and Laboratory Managers –

Please be advised that beginning the week of July 13, 2020, weekly laboratory inspections conducted by the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) are scheduled to resume on Columbia University’s Manhattan campuses.

A number of modifications have been agreed to with the FDNY in order to accomplish these visits safely, including the following:

- Inspections will be carried out on a consolidated schedule, limiting weekly visits to laboratories in a single building;
- Weekly building assignments will be communicated to EH&S in advance; subsequently, these weekly assignments will be communicated to building occupants in order to ensure that laboratories can accommodate the presence of an inspector;
- FDNY will provide inspectors with a full complement of necessary PPE, including a face covering and gloves;
- Inspections will be conducted in a minimally invasive, “contactless” manner, while avoiding unnecessary contact with other on-site personnel.

As always, EH&S staff will accompany the FDNY inspector, and every effort will be made to resolve observations before they lead to formal findings or violations. Of particular note, please ensure that laboratories must be attended at all times of operation by a [C-14 Certificate of Fitness holder](#), either by on-site presence, or through a formal, [approved coverage arrangement](#).

In addition, it is strongly recommended that laboratories verify the following, in advance of a future inspection, to ensure the safety of their personnel, to remain in compliance and to experience a positive inspection outcome:

1. Ensure all emergency equipment is accessible and functional (e.g., eyewash has been flushed, overhead emergency shower has Facilities inspection tag showing test date within the past 12 months and portable fire extinguisher is mounted and accessible);
2. Ensure all chemicals are segregated according to hazard class, all containers are properly labeled and labels facing forward to help with a “contactless” inspection. The laboratory’s inventory of flammable chemicals must be below its allowable limit;
3. Laboratory housekeeping is maintained in accordance with best practices, including maintenance of adequate aisle space, removal of storage from chemical fume hoods, elimination of excess combustible materials (e.g., paper and cardboard) and overall clutter reduction.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation with these important safety and compliance checks which are a condition of each laboratory’s permit to operate.

Best Regards,
Chris

Christopher M. Pitoscia, MPH, CSP
Associate Director
Columbia University - Environmental Health & Safety
p. 212-305-5603 f. 212-305-0318
www.ehs.columbia.edu