FDN(wh)Y Me?

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Environmental Health and Safety

As an aid to laboratories in avoiding FDNY Violation Orders (VO) and Summonses (SUM), EH&S distributes summaries of FDNY inspection findings which resulted in a VO or SUM to an actual laboratory on either the Morningside or Medical Center campus. These real-life scenarios are meant to assist the research community in ensuring that such conditions do not exist in their own laboratories.

May, 2022
Certificate of Fitness (C-14)

The Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) requires a permit for all laboratories in which more than 1-gallon of flammable or combustible liquid or 75 standard cubic feet (SCF) of flammable gas are handled, stored, or used for testing, research, or experimental purposes. To obtain and maintain the appropriate conditions for a permit, laboratories must adhere to all applicable fire safety regulations. FDNY conducts regular inspections in permitted laboratories to ensure compliance.

In addition to compliance with physical conditions and requirements, FDNY requires a Certificate of Fitness (C-14) holder to be present at all times while the laboratory is in operation, including nights, weekends and holidays. If a lab is found to be in operation without a C-14 holder present, a VO can be issued.

What is the Certificate of Fitness (C-14)?
FDNY offers an exam to assess a researcher's understanding of the applicable sections of the NYC Fire Code. Upon passing the exam, a researcher will receive a C-14 card that validates their knowledge of how to keep a permitted laboratory space in compliance with fire safety regulations.

Who can get a C-14?
A C-14 applicant must have a PhD or MD, MS, MA, or MPH, or a BA or BS in one of the following fields: Chemistry, Biology, Biochemistry, Environmental or Health Sciences, Medical Technology, or Engineering (Chemical, Environmental, Mechanical, or Biomedical). An applicant who has an AAS or AS degree with 60 minimum credits in applicable science or engineering courses can also obtain a C-14.

How can a researcher get a C-14?
A researcher with a Bachelor's degree without two years of post-baccalaureate laboratory experience or an AAS or AS degree with 60 minimum credits needs to submit an application and then take the exam at FDNY headquarters in Brooklyn.

A PhD, MD, MS, MA, or MPH, or BA/BS with two years of post-baccalaureate laboratory experience can take the RASCAL Certificate of Fitness Holder Training (TC5451) course in lieu of going to Brooklyn - https://www.rascal.columbia.edu/tc/course/TC5451/courseOverview. Take the training, pass the test, and submit the appropriate paperwork to fire-life@columbia.edu and wait for your card to arrive.

How is the C-14 renewed?
To renew the C-14 card (every three years), simply fill out the renewal form less than 60 days before expiration or up to one year past expiration and email it to fire-life@columbia.edu (https://research.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/EHS/Fire%20Safety/C14RenewalForm.pdf).

What should be done with the C-14 once it's been received?
An FDNY Inspector surveys each laboratory space on an annual basis, and checks for valid C-14 card(s) of any researcher(s) working in the space. Providing photocopies of C-14 cards on the back of the laboratory door can speed up this aspect of the inspection.

Please note, the FDNY Laboratory Inspection Unit is generally onsite on a weekly schedule at CUIMC or bi-weekly at the Morningside campus. Please reach out to EH&S if you would like to request a consultation, ask a question, or would like some help: labsafety@columbia.edu