Introduction

By Dr Sylvia Lachberg, UWA’s Biosafety Manager.

Welcome to our second edition of Biosafety News!

Thanks to those of you who have submitted your inventories of GMOs. You will have the chance to update these records annually in August when we send them back to you and request that you update them. If you have not sent them through yet, please take a look at the first edition of Biosafety News to get the correct format for the inventory and send your inventory of GMOs to the Biosafety Office.

I have recently inspected several of the University’s OGTR-certified research facilities and have asked the lab managers to get the minor gouges in the walls and missing patches of paintwork fixed. This kind of wear and tear on labs is normal, but in order to remain certified with the OGTR, the damage has to be fixed at least annually. This year I noticed several labs that had damage to the walls where people had attached posters with pins or with sticky tape, and then removed them leaving holes or patches of missing paint. Facilities Management has asked me to remind staff working in the University’s research facilities, and particularly in OGTR certified facilities, that these areas are very specialised because of their need to be able to contain hazardous research and must be maintained to a high standard within the University. For OGTR-certified facilities, keeping them well-maintained is a requirement in order for UWA to remain an accredited organisation with the OGTR. As such we need to treat these facilities carefully, and all the surfaces (walls, floors, benches) need to remain sealed. Thus if you have posters or labels to put up on the walls of facilities please ensure they are laminated and adhered to the walls with an adhesive putty (i.e. Blu Tac). Otherwise when they are removed the paint is sometimes removed and will need to be repainted. Please do not use pins to stick things to the walls as this also creates a problem that will need to be repaired when the pins are removed. I understand that many of our facilities are old but the type of work that we do in these facilities requires UWA to be accredited with the OGTR and as such we need to maintain our facilities to this high standard. I am sure that you will all do what you can to be careful when working in these facilities.

Biosafety News provides information to researchers and School/Centre managers of any changes to the Gene Technology Act and Regulations or any other changes that the UWA Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) want to let you know about.

In this edition of the newsletter, the IBC would like to let you know about:

- New additions to the Biosafety Office,
- How to manage your Genetically Modified (GM) Dealing,
• How to manage your non-GM Biohazardous Project,
• Biosafety tips

Send us any suggestions and questions and we will answer them in the next issue of Biosafety News.

New to The Biosafety Office

New staff
This year we welcome a new staff member to the Biosafety Office, UWA’s Biological Compliance Officer Dr Bernadette Bradley. Bernadette did her PhD studying wheat genetics at Murdoch University’s State Agricultural Biotechnology Centre, and did her post-doctoral, asthma genetics research at the Lung Institute of WA based at WAIMR QEII.

New email address
As well as our individual email addresses, the Biosafety Office now has a shared email address that you can use to contact either Sylvia or Bernadette: biosafety@admin.uwa.edu.au.

New software
The Biosafety Office is now using a new software package to keep track of its work. The Environmental Safety Management (ESM) software from USA company InfoEd is now being used to keep track of researchers’ applications to perform gene technology and the status of UWA’s OGTR-certified facilities. The software also helps produces the agenda for the Institutional Biosafety Committee meetings. ESM is similar to other InfoEd products now being used by the Animal Ethics and Human Ethics Offices.
Updating our webpages
We are currently in the process of updating our webpages and we are seeking digital photos to decorate them. We are looking for photos that reflect the activities of the Biosafety Office, including microbes, animals, plants, gels, sequencing data and laboratories – but they have to belong to UWA staff so we don’t infringe anyone else’s copyright. Any donations of digital photos would be most welcome, please email them to us.

Managing your GM Dealing

All Dealings are now for 5 years
All GM Dealings are now automatically given a 5 year period, unless they specifically request a shorter timeframe. At the end of 5 years the Chief Investigator must re-apply to do the Dealing by re-submitting the same application form that has been updated and re-signed.

GM Dealing Annual/Final Report

Every year in August, Chief Investigators of GM Dealings will now have to submit a short Annual/Final Report updating details about their project (Tick box answer to a series of questions), such as changes of staff and students. This Report is also used whenever you want to communicate minor changes in the administrative details of a Dealing, and also at the end of a Dealing. The Biosafety Office will remind Chief Investigators in July that they need to submit a report in August.
Institutional Record of GMOs

Carrying on from last year under the new OGTR regulations, UWA is required to keep an Institutional record of the storage of all GMOs. In July/August 2010 we will be asking Chief Investigators of GM Dealings to fill in a GMO record for their GMOs. The record will contain information about the type and number of GMOs, and their location in the university. The Institutional Record will be kept by the Biosafety Office, with School and Lab Managers given lists of the GMOs held in their labs. The GMO Records will be updated every year in August as part of the annual reporting process.

Mid year Gene Technology Awareness Session

The next Gene Technology Awareness Session will be held on Friday 23rd July 2010 from 9.30am until 11am in the Geography and Geology Woolnough Lecture Theatre. This course is compulsory for all researchers doing Gene Technology research or working in an OGTR-certified facility. Register on our webpages http://www.research.uwa.edu.au/staff/biological/gene-technology-awareness.

Managing your non-GM Biohazardous Project

Non-GM Biohazardous Project Annual/Final Report

Every year in August, researchers working with non-GM biohazardous organisms will now have to submit a short Annual/Final Report updating details about their project, such as changes of staff and students. This Report is also used whenever you want to communicate minor changes in the administrative details of a project, and also at the end of a project. The Biosafety Office will remind researchers in July that they need to submit a report in August.

Institutional Record of non-GM Biohazardous Organisms

This year UWA will begin to keep an Institutional Record of the storage of all non-GM Biohazardous Organisms in Classes PC2, PC3 and PC4. In July/August 2010 we will be asking researchers to fill in the Institutional Record of non-GM Biohazardous Organisms for their microbes. The record will contain information about the type and
number of organisms, and their location in the university. The Institutional Record will be kept by the Biosafety Office, with School and Lab Managers given lists of the GMOs held in their labs. The GMO Records will be updated every year in August as part of the annual reporting process.

BIOSAFETY TIPS

Make sure your vaccinations are up to date, and vaccinate new staff and students as part of your normal lab induction processes. If you are handling human blood or body tissue, get your Hepatitis B vaccination. If you are working with animals, get your Tetanus and Q Fever vaccination, depending on your duties. If you are working with infectious micro-organisms, check if there is a vaccine available against them. There is more information on UWA’s Safety webpages: http://www.safety.uwa.edu.au/policies/immunisation.