

COMMITTEE ON CHEMICAL SAFETY
SAFE PRACTICES SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

September 6, 2003

Attending: Tamara Nameroff (ACS Assistant Director of Special Projects), Barbara Foster, Harry Elston, Paul Schickedantz, Ken Fivizzani (CCS Chair), Steve Sichak, Art Marcinkowsky, Michael Cournoyer, Herb Silber (ConC liaison), and Russ Phifer (subcommittee Chair).

1. The subcommittee discussed the comments made on the Greener Approaches manual, and provided Tamara Nameroff with a copy of all of the comments received and a compiled summary. The discussion centered primarily on the issue of microwaving flammable materials, though there were other general comments received. Michael and Barbara have also written a technical paper on microwave which they plan to submit to *The Journal of Chemical Education*.

2. The subcommittee reviewed a letter from a Ph.D. candidate whose fiancé is being asked to work on a project requiring training and vaccination for meningitis. The subcommittee approved the following response:

“Our initial suggestion is that you should read the product information on the vaccine to determine hazards and possible side effects associated with the product; this may help clarify the risks. Since we have no details on the specific project, it is impossible to comment on a specific course of action, or any particular safety aspects of the project. The issue of refusing to perform unsafe work appears to be largely a legal issue; our review indicates that it is possible to complain to OSHA (this can even be done online) if you believe working conditions are unsafe or unhealthful. The OSHA Act gives employees the right to file complaints about workplace safety and health hazards, and also gives complainants the right to request that their names not be revealed to their employers. That said, it would be prudent for your fiancé to discuss this situation with her supervisor if she is uncomfortable with the proposed working conditions.”

3. The subcommittee discussed the issue of pregnant laboratory workers. There has been much “chat” lately on the Safety listserv regarding this issue, and we were asked whether or not we should consider developing a policy statement. The subcommittee decided not to pursue this because of the difficulty in addressing the issue given the lack of available data. This issue is left largely up to employers; unless asked to comment on a specific situation or issue regarding pregnant workers, we would prefer not to tackle this.

4. The Mercury Spills booklet is still in limbo due to ACS staffing problems. The subcommittee suggests that the document be web-published in its current condition, with

a disclaimer that the document is in draft form and that comments, suggestions, and appropriate graphics are welcome.

5. The final issue discussed was the issue of safety shower locations. The ANSI standard on this specifies that a shower should be accessible within 10 seconds, with no obstructions, and no change in level. It would appear that based on this, showers should be located inside the laboratory and not in hallways.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Submitted by Russ Phifer, Subcommittee Chair