Failure to Properly Control Items Labeled as Radioactive Material

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory Lessons Learned

LL-2005-03

Concern Statement: During the process of relocating laboratory supplies to a new facility, Laboratory staff failed to properly control movement of items labeled as radioactive material.

Applicable to: All Laboratory staff that work with radioactive material.

Incident: LBNL staff discovered items labeled as radioactive material at the B903 warehouse, which is prohibited from receiving or storing radioactive material or equipment. The items had been transferred to the warehouse during the clean-out of a laboratory that is relocating to a new facility. Upon discovery at B903, all items labeled as radioactive material were transferred back to LBNL main site by Operational Health Physics (OHP) staff, surveyed, and analyzed prior to disposal. The items were found to be free of radioactive contamination.

Cause: Three separate actions contributed to the improper management of these items:

1. Improper defacing of labels on containers that were not currently used for work with radioactive materials.
2. Storage or movement of the items from the posted Radioactive Material Area (RMA) or Radioactive Material Storage Area (RSA) without contacting OHP for a release survey.
3. Inattention to items labeled as radioactive, stored outside an RMA, while packaging them for transfer as uncontrolled materials.

Recommended Actions

- Thoroughly inspect items for the presence of radioactive material labels during laboratory moves from locations where radioactive materials have been used or stored. This includes items stored outside posted RMAs and RSAs.

- Immediately notify an OHP Group staff member when items labeled as radioactive material are discovered outside a posted RMA or RSA, whether in preparation for move or during routine operations.
- Do not handle any item with radioactive material labeling without the proper training. GERT alone does not authorize the handling any item labeled as radioactive material.

Further Information

Any additional assistance or questions regarding this incident or the lessons learned may be directed to Christine Donahue (x7736).

For other lessons learned, go to: http://www.lbl.gov/ehs/html/lessons_learned.htm

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