What is The Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence?

The Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence (LCEE) is a not-for-profit corporation formed by multiple New England colleges and universities interested in developing better systems and programs for managing and regulating the environmental impacts of laboratories.

How to Join

Membership in the Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence is open to all organizations with significant laboratory activities. There are three membership categories:

- Project XL participants: $5000/year
- LCEE membership: $2500/year
- Institutions outside New England: $850/year

For More Information

General technical information about LCEE activities can be found at the Lab-XL web site at http://esf.uvm.edu/labxl

For more information about the organization, or if you have specific questions, contact Thomas Balf at ML Strategies, Inc. at (617)348-1838 or by e-mail at LCEE@mlstrat.com.

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The Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence

Searching for...
Developing...
Sharing...

- Better systems to manage laboratory environmental impacts
- Programs to enhance laboratory worker safety
- A more effective scheme for regulating laboratories

Who's Involved with The Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence?

Currently, there are eight institutional members of the consortium:

- Boston College
- Harvard University
- Northeastern University
- Trinity College, Hartford, CT
- Tufts University
- University of Massachusetts — Boston
- University of Massachusetts — Amherst
- University of Vermont

Interested organizations outside New England are welcome to participate. In particular, academic institutions, hospitals and corporations with extensive laboratory activities are encouraged to join this effort.

Why This Effort?

The Laboratory Consortium for Environmental Excellence (LCEE) is a solutions-oriented group dedicated to identifying, developing and sharing best environmental management practices in laboratories. This interest is motivated by the need for continuous improvement of our laboratory environmental, health and safety programs. We are using several strategies to develop and improve management programs to meet the special challenges faced by laboratories.

The Challenge

Laboratories are workplaces designed to host a wide variety of small scale activities. Research conducted in laboratories often involves a series of potentially hazardous operations which use small amounts of a variety of chemicals. The types of operations conducted there change frequently.

Because of these factors, control of laboratory hazards relies on flexible management programs that apply to a wide variety of activities, such as safety training for laboratory workers and institutional support services.

Unfortunately, current federal and state environmental regulations are often quite detailed and prescriptive and limit the flexibility of these programs in effectively achieving the desired outcomes. As a result, although the environmental impact of laboratory work is small, the regulatory impact on laboratory institutions is large.

A Regulatory Alternative

The mismatch between the environmental regulations and the reality of laboratory work creates significant confusion for laboratory workers, health and safety professionals and the regulators themselves with regard to how regulations should clearly and consistently be applied to laboratories. The LCEE is interested in developing performance-oriented environmental standards, similar to the OSHA laboratory standard, to help solve this problem and to protect human health and the environment. The regulations which are our primary focus are those promulgated by the EPA and associated state agencies to manage hazardous waste (RCRA), to regulate or reduce air pollution (the Clean Air Act) and to insure appropriate hazardous material emergency response (SARA Title III).

Several of the LCEE institutions are participating, with EPA Region I and the appropriate state environmental agencies, in an effort to achieve better environmental results through an alternative regulatory approach. This program will be administered and monitored under the EPA's Project XL initiative. The goal of the project is to demonstrate improved environmental performance from laboratories that operate under the revised regulatory model.

The first focus of the Project XL effort will be to adapt hazardous waste regulations to more closely fit the laboratory setting. These regulations, which are designed for and effectively implemented in industrial settings, apply poorly to laboratories. The model under development incorporates concepts from the internationally-recognized ISO 14001 environmental management systems standard, such as senior management commitment and institutional policy development, and from RCRA itself, as adapted to meet the realities of the laboratory setting.

The Project XL process will provide extensive opportunities for stakeholder involvement from experts in laboratory management, government officials and the environmental community. The final product will be open to public review and comment.

Information Sharing

Another strategy for improving our health and safety programs is sharing information and resources among our members. Membership provides opportunities to help:

- Develop educational and training materials for laboratory workers;
- Share information about managing and minimizing laboratory wastes and other environmental impacts;
- Promote pollution prevention and environmental performance monitoring for laboratories;
- Develop shared environmental services between institutions;
- Integrate environmental management with laboratory health and safety practices.

By identifying best practices and defining control systems, tools and programs that apply broadly to laboratories, environmental performance can be enhanced. At the same time, laboratory workers can be better protected and laboratory activities can be conducted in a safe and effective manner for the benefit of both the researcher and the general public.