

UV Light Eye Injury

Situation: EHS was notified by a Professor that a student employee had burned their eyes using a UV light. EHS met with the Professor and the student to discuss the incident.

The lab uses UV light to sterilize media prior to the DNA extraction process. The transilluminator has a built-in, hinged, UV safety screen and the lab has UV safety glasses stored adjacent to the transilluminator.

A student employee was placing centrifuge tubes of media on the transilluminator. The student was not wearing eye protection and the UV safety screen was not positioned between the student and the UV light. Later that evening, the student began experiencing extreme discomfort in his eyes. The next morning the student went to the emergency room; the student initially did not believe their discomfort was due to the UV light exposure. The student was treated at the emergency room and released. Several days later, the student was still experiencing some discomfort in their eyes. The student went to Student Health Services and was treated and released. According to the student, their eyes had since healed and they were no longer experiencing any discomfort.

Causes: The student employee was not wearing eye protection while using a UV light and the built-in UV safety screen was not in place.

The student's regular glasses have UV protection but the student was not wearing their glasses that day and they forgot to put on the glasses provided in the lab.

Although the student was verbally trained on the procedures to use the transilluminator, there was no written Standard Operating Procedure in place.

The lab was not abiding by the requirements of the *Chemical Hygiene Plan*.

EHS has not effectively communicated with Principal Investigators about the existence of and the need to abide by the *Chemical Hygiene Plan*.

Corrective Actions: Create a written Standard Operating Procedure for using the transilluminator.

EHS should provide all labs with a copy of the *Chemical Hygiene Plan* and better communicate the requirements through the chemical hygiene officer of each college.

Prevention: Require all users of the transilluminator to read and become familiar with the Standard Operating Procedure.

Keep documentation/training records (names, dates) of all lab personnel who use the transilluminator.

Reference: UNM *Chemical Hygiene Plan*