

LDEO LAB SAFETY GRAM

8/6/2014—Yesterday, there was a fire in a laboratory in Comer. A toaster oven caught fire resulting in property damage to the lab. The lab was locked, while the toaster oven was left on, located on a wooden shelf, against the wall. There were stacks of paper towel on the shelf above which also caught fire. The amount of smoke generated overwhelmed the ventilation system and smoke escaped into the hallway and adjacent labs. Fortunately persons working in the adjacent lab smelled the smoke and responded with fire extinguishers to put out the fire. Although the physical damage is relatively minor, the lab will require an extensive cleanup that will take a number of weeks to complete.



LESSONS LEARNED:

Researchers should not use consumer rated appliances for conducting laboratory work. Importantly, such appliances should not be left on unattended and combustible materials must never be located adjacent to these appliances such that if they malfunction they will catch fire.

A review of the building construction drawings revealed a defect in the design of the fire alarm system. Therefore, the system will be enhanced with additional smoke detectors to provide an earlier warning of fire and smoke.

All laboratory personnel should survey their labs for similar potential fire hazards and take corrective actions to prevent a fire.

Importantly, if your lab work involves potential fire hazards such as working with open flames, pyrophoric chemicals, potentially combustible reactions, hot plates, toaster ovens or similar appliances, contact LDEO Safety so that we can assess the hazard and recommend clearances, protective measures, procedures, etc..

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