

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has gained recognition as a center of excellence for teaching, medical services, and research programs. This is a highly commendable achievement and one that could not have been realized without the continued support and dedication of faculty, staff members, and employees. Similar unfailing cooperation and support is necessary for the institution to be equally successful in its development of a comprehensive occupational health and safety program for protection of university personnel, students, and the community. An important part of this program is concerned with safety in research studies and safe disposal of laboratory and medical wastes.

The purpose of this manual is to describe the operation of the biological safety program and to provide guidelines for all university personnel for the safe operation of laboratories and performance of experiments involving biological agents. While many of the requirements mentioned herein have long been recognized by prudent members of the scientific community as essential when conducting research with hazardous or potentially hazardous biological materials, certain of them constitute recommendations and specific provisions promulgated by local, state, and federal government agencies, and by national accrediting organizations dedicated to the upgrading of research facilities and practices. The amalgamation and inclusion of these many safety requirements and guidelines in this manual signifies that the University of Alabama at Birmingham accepts, agrees to abide by, and to enforce them as they apply to research studies performed on University premises.

For the benefit of persons desiring to review in greater depth the safety recommendations, guidelines and regulations promulgated by the various government agencies and scientific organizations, the original published sources are listed under REFERENCES at the back of the manual or accessed from the OH&S web site at www.healthsafe.uab.edu.

Faculty and staff members are urged to carefully review Section 2 of this manual that deals briefly with the subject of liability in laboratory studies.