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Decommissioning a science area

Posted by Anonymous on Wed, 2019-02-20 12:10

Decommissioning a science area: Our school is building a new science area and will be decommissioning the existing science rooms. What advice can you provide on this process please?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

Showing 1-1 of 1 Responses

Answer by labsupport on question Decommissioning a science area

Submitted by sat on 20 February 2019

Answer reviewed 11 February 2023

Consultation

It is important that all stakeholders are involved in the overall planning of a new facility. The stakeholders comprise those who will use or maintain the new facility, those who are affected during the process of construction, and the various contractors engaged to undertake the work. The overall success of the project depends on effective consultation from the beginning with all these groups.

We recommend that you consider the Science ASSIST [GUIDELINES for the design and planning of secondary school science facilities in Australian schools](#) and a previous Q&A: [Dust at workplace](#) as part of your consultation process.

Decommissioning a laboratory

When a laboratory is decommissioned, it should be cleared of all hazards and left in a safe, clean and decontaminated state for new occupants or construction workers involved in any refurbishment or renovation. Laboratory staff with experience in handling chemicals and scientific equipment should conduct the packing and unpacking (upon relocation). Extra staffing hours should be allocated to facilitate these extra duties.

Some aspects to consider include, but are not limited to:

Chemicals Hazards:

- All chemicals should be removed and either relocated or appropriately disposed of through a chemical waste management program. The chemicals should be checked to ensure that they are appropriately labelled.
- If chemicals are to be relocated, suitable containment should be provided for any temporary storage. Suitable containment should be secure and meet requirements for segregating incompatible chemicals. It should be adequately ventilated, and the chemicals should also be protected from direct sunlight, temperature extremes and humidity.
- Transportation of chemicals to new facilities should not be conducted in private vehicles, due to safety and insurance issues. Specialist moving companies should be consulted.
- All storage areas, equipment (including fume cupboards, fridges etc), bench tops, walls and floors should be thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated with an appropriate cleaner.
- Any gas cylinders should have their valves closed and regulators and all equipment removed. Cylinders can then be removed, relocated or returned to the suppliers. For further information on handling gas cylinders see [SOP: Gas cylinders in school science areas](#)

Biological hazards:

- All biological materials should be removed and relocated, and any waste decontaminated and disposed of appropriately.
- Decontaminate all storage areas, equipment and work areas with appropriate disinfectant.

General hazards:

- All broken glass and sharps should be placed into puncture resistant containers and suitably disposed.
- Ensure that there are no other hazards remaining in cupboards, fridges and freezers. (Check for radioactive, electrical and general hazards).
- When hazards have been removed and areas decontaminated, hazard signs should be removed from all doors, storage areas and equipment.

We have found several checklists from universities that are used to assist in this decontamination procedure. See links below.

References and links:

Science ASSIST. 2017. *GUIDELINES for the design and planning of secondary school science facilities in Australian schools*, Retrieved from Science ASSIST website, <https://assist.asta.edu.au/resource/4175/guidelines-design-and-planning-...>

Science ASSIST. 2015. Q&A: Dust at workplace. Retrieved from Science ASSIST website, <https://assist.asta.edu.au/question/3355/dust-workplace>

University of New South Wales. 2015. HS723 Laboratory and equipment decommissioning project - Project Cessation Procedure, UNSW Sydney Governance website, <https://safety.unsw.edu.au/hs723-laboratory-and-equipment-decommissionin...>

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University of Western Australia. 2012. Project-Cessation-Laboratory-Decommissioning-Checklist, University of WA website, www.safety.uwa.edu.au/___data/assets/rf_file/0009/2125908/Project-Cessat...

University of Wollongong, WHS Unit. 2016. Laboratory decommissioning checklist, UOW website, <https://staff.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@ohs/documents/doc/uow017003.pdf>

Some overseas links

Healthy Schools Network Inc. 2012. School Renovation and Construction: What you need to know to protect child and adult environmental health, Healthy Schools Network website, http://www.healthyschools.org/data/files/Renovation_and_Construction_Gui...

'Lab decommissioning', University of Victoria (Canada) Occupational Health, Safety & Environment website, <https://www.uvic.ca/ohse/research/laboratory/decommissioning/index.php> (Accessed February 2019)

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