

Policy on Environmental Health and Safety

Policy Title	Policy on Environmental Health and Safety
Policy #	02.113.2
Policy Owner	Coordinator, Environmental Health & Safety
Contact Information	Questions about this policy can be directed to the Coordinator, Environmental Health & Safety (401) 874-7993.
Approved By	President of the University of Rhode Island
Effective Date	August 15, 2025
Next Review Date	No later than August 31, 2030
Who Needs to Know About this Policy	All University faculty, staff, students, and Affiliates including any other state employees in work environments under University jurisdiction.
Definitions	<p>Environmental Health and Safety. The science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being by 1) identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents, and 2) limiting exposures to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, water, soil, food, and other environmental media or settings that may adversely affect human health.</p> <p>Occupational Safety and Health. The health and well-being of people employed in a work environment and the enforcement of laws and regulations designed to prevent workplace illnesses, accidents, injuries, and fatalities.</p> <p>University Affiliate. Any individual who is not a faculty member, staff, or student who otherwise has a formal relationship with the University, including but not limited to visiting scholars, visiting students, research fellows, professional program participants, adjunct or clinical personnel, volunteers, employees and associates of the URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement, and members of the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees. Vendors and contractors are not considered affiliates.</p>
Statutes, Regulations, and Policies Governing or Necessitating This Policy	Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 29 U.S.C. § 654, 5(a)1, General Duty Clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

Reason for Policy/Purpose	To prevent accidents, injuries, and property damage and to help each member of the University community maintain a high standard of safety and health; to meet continuous compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and standards at the federal, state, and local level related to Environmental Health and Safety.
Forms Related to this Policy	None

Policy Statement

The Office of Environmental Health and Safety at the University of Rhode Island (“University” or “URI”) has been charged with safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of its students, personnel, and the visiting public whenever they participate in campus activities. The University is committed to an environment and culture of safety. The University will meet this commitment through the development and implementation of Environmental Health and Safety standards and programs, that align to the University’s mission and values, through the appropriate training and education of employees, students, and University Affiliates concerning those programs and standards, and through the following additional actions:

1. Establishing and following University standards relating to environmental protection and personal safety with an objective of reducing the risk of injury or illness to people, preventing property damage at all locations where operations and/or activities occur, and ensuring continuity of University operations.
2. Achieving and maintaining compliance with federal, state, and local Environmental Health and Safety laws and regulations.
3. Identifying and correcting health and safety hazards and encouraging faculty, staff, students, University Affiliates to develop programs to identify, report, and correct potential hazards.
4. Participating in the development of proactive, sound environmental health and effective safety guidelines and policies.
5. Conducting activities in a manner that is protective of the environment, informing the URI community on topics regarding environmental impact, and employing hazardous waste minimization best management practices for institutional operations.
6. Measuring and continuously improving Environmental Health and Safety performance at the University.
7. Providing information to faculty, staff, students, and University Affiliates about health and safety hazards.
8. Providing necessary and appropriate training and education in Environmental Health and Safety related programs, standards and best practices.

The Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS) is authorized to implement programs and plans designed to meet compliance requirements and maintain a safe and healthy environment for the campus community including attention to all aspects of chemical, biological, radiological, and industrial hygiene. The program shall also incorporate an Occupational Safety and Health program designed to prevent illnesses, accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

I. Definition of Responsibility and Authority

The creation of a safe workplace and a culture of safety requires attention and responsibility at every level of the University, including all faculty, staff, students, and University Affiliates. Core responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

A. University President

1. Has ultimate authority for URI's compliance with Environmental Health and Safety standards and policies at all facilities under University control.
2. Has authorized the Vice President for Administration and Finance, the Assistant Vice President of Enterprise Risk Management, and the OEHS staff to implement and manage the University's Environmental Health and Safety programs and to monitor the University's compliance with standards and policies.
3. Communicates the importance of safety and expectations to the URI community to establish and maintain a strong safety program that continually improves and protects all faculty, staff, students, University Affiliates, and guests.

B. Vice Presidents for Administration and Finance, Research and Economic Development, and Academic Affairs

1. Ensure the effective implementation of this policy.
2. Support safety trainings, inspection programs, and emergency drills within the University.
3. Ensure that effective systems are established to identify and address institutional safety concerns.
4. Communicate risks and safety expectations to the URI community and support a strong culture of safety.
5. Ensure that University administration, deans, and department heads are notified when there are serious safety issues/incidents on campus.

C. Deans and College Administrators

1. Ensure the effective implementation of this policy within the academic departments/administrative units under their control including the implementation of all required OEHS programs, inspections, and trainings.
2. Communicate to faculty, staff, students, University Affiliates, and visitors that everyone shares the obligation to work in a safe, healthful, environmentally protective manner.

D. Department Chairs

1. Work with the appropriate vice presidents, deans, and college administrators to administer, promote, and facilitate the effective implementation of this policy, particularly with respect to faculty and staff operations and workspace(s).
2. Oversee the development and implementation of safety practices, protocols, and rules for teaching laboratories and workspace within their purview.
3. Work with OEHS staff to ensure that their department members and affiliates receive compliance training regarding potential hazards associated with each person's employment with URI.
4. Work with OEHS staff to comply with regular inspections for teaching/research laboratories, shops, storerooms, studios, or any other work area.

5. Work with OEHS staff periodically to update compliance training records for the employees, students, and University Affiliates.

E. Principal Investigators/Supervisors

1. Ensure that personnel and operations in their areas comply with Environmental Health and Safety laws and regulations.
2. Analyze work procedures to identify hazards and ensure measures are implemented to eliminate or control those hazards.
3. Ensure workplace hazards and Environmental Health and Safety related policies and procedures are communicated to employees, students, University Affiliates, and visitors.
4. Ensure safe operating procedures are in place with proper safety equipment and personal protective equipment to perform work safely.
5. Conduct periodic hazard analysis of all program activities to identify potential risks or areas in need of additional safety measures, standard operating procedures, or training.
6. Ensure that participants in their programs are adequately trained and have completed all OEHS and job specific trainings to identify and mitigate potential hazards.
7. Prepare specific standard operating procedures prior to using certain hazardous chemicals, processes, and equipment as well as provide training to ensure employees, students, and University Affiliates understand associated hazards.
8. Encourage prompt reporting of health and safety concerns and any accidents/incidents in the work area.
9. Assist OEHS staff with safety inspection in their operations and take prompt actions to fix any noted deficiencies.
10. Ensure that a proper material (i.e., chemical, biological, radiation, etc.) inventory is maintained and updated at minimum annually or whenever significant changes occur.

F. Employees/Laboratory Workers/Trainees/Students

1. Read, understand, and follow all safety rules and regulations that apply to their work area.
2. Complete all appropriate safety trainings provided by the OEHS staff and the area supervisor or Principal Investigator.
3. Conduct each operation in accordance with the work area's specific safety procedures and measures.
4. Utilize available and proper engineering and administrative controls, and appropriate personal protective equipment.
5. Develop good personal work area safety habits and promote good housekeeping practices in work areas.
6. Immediately report all safety incidents or accidents to the supervisor and/or a faculty member.
7. Report unsafe practices and hazardous conditions to the work area supervisor or OEHS.
8. Participate in periodic safety inspections of the work area.

II. Environmental Health and Safety Authority

Under the direction of the Assistant Vice President of Enterprise Risk Management, the Office of Environmental Health & Safety provides technical expertise, assistance with consultations, and serves to assure compliance with legal requirements. Through technical assistance and oversight, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety will direct the campus toward compliance with Environmental Health and Safety practices that are required by laws or

regulations. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety shall have the authority to audit and recommend appropriate corrective or planning strategies, including the development of safety programs. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety will consult with external agencies or regulatory bodies as necessary and appropriate on behalf of the University.

A. Corrective Action Reports and Citations

The Office of Environmental Health and Safety is authorized to survey and monitor all areas of the campus to assess environmental risks, life safety exposures, and training requirements, and to recommend improvements. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety will submit written reports identifying hazards and recommending corrective action. In the presence of severe hazards or in the case of non-compliance with local, state, and federal regulations or University policies, improvements will be required.

The OEHS Coordinator or designee has the authority to issue, following appropriate investigation, noncompliance citations to the appropriate individuals and principal investigator for lack of improvements in response to a formal report or recommendation.

Copies of any formal reports and noncompliance citations associated with unsafe work practices will be provided to the individual, their immediate supervisor, the Vice President for Human Resources, and to other administrators with responsibility for the activity involved including the chair(s) of departments and dean(s) of the college(s) in which the individual works as applicable. Specifically with regards to students or student organizations, copies of reports and/or citations given to individual students or student organizations will be forwarded to the dean of students, if required. The dean or designee will determine an appropriate resolution utilizing the normal student disciplinary processes as outlined in the Student Handbook. For both students and employees, a formal appeal to the Office of Environmental Health and Safety and the appropriate vice president (and dean(s) if necessary), can be made by submitting a letter of appeal to the OEHS office within five (5) days of receiving the inspection report. The OEHS office, with assistance from the appropriate vice president, will make a decision regarding the appeal.

B. Cessation of Hazardous Activities

The OEHS Coordinator or designee has the authority to immediately suspend or restrict any operation that

- Presents a serious hazard (actual or potential) associated with the health, life, safety, or welfare of campus personnel or the public;
- Is found to be a violation of standards, statute, regulation, or University policy; or
- Is detrimental to the environment

If available, assistance from the relevant administrator, principal investigator, or supervisor will be requested.

If the Office of Environmental Health and Safety orders cessation of an activity, OEHS staff will immediately communicate the problem(s) and violation(s) to the individual, the individual's direct supervisor, other University administrators with responsibility for the department or center involved, and the appropriate regulatory agency (when required to do so by law).

The activity may be resumed only with the approval of the OEHS Coordinator or designee, in consultation with the provost or vice president as appropriate and the relevant administrators or supervisors.

Exceptions

None

Policy Review and Revisions

(Versions earlier than the first policy number may be paper only)

Policy #	Effective Date	Reason for Change	Changes to Policy
02.113.1	November 2, 2020	n/a	n/a
02.113.2	August 15, 2025	Scheduled Review	Non-Material Edits