

You Have Safety Questions? We Have Safety Answers!

QUESTION # 1

Throughout my career I have maintained a strict policy of not allowing the consumption of any foods in our school science labs. I am now faced with new science teachers, and teachers from other departments, bringing foods into the labs even when hazardous materials are present. This is occurring despite a departmental policy against this practice. Is there a policy/regulation from STAO which deals with the issue of food consumption in science labs?

RESPONSE

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 834, Section 131) states that:

No food, drink or tobacco shall be taken into, left, or consumed in any room, area, or place where any substance that is poisonous by ingestion is exposed.

The STAO Position Regarding Laboratory Safety (*Board of Director's Handbook 1997, Part 5*) includes the following:

The facilities must comply with all existing regulations and must provide as safe a working environment as possible.

Accordingly, it follows that eating and drinking in laboratories and preparation rooms should not be allowed since accidental contamination of food used in laboratories can and does occur. Similarly refrigerators which are used for keeping chemicals and biological materials must not be used for storing food for human consumption.

The Ministry of Labor would take a very dim view of any infraction, if discovered as a result of a visit to a

« « « By the STAO Safety Committee

The STAO Safety Committee welcomes enquiries, with respect to safety issues, from STAO members. Please send your questions to the Safety Committee Chair (refer to page 4 'Committee Chairs'). Your questions and the STAO Safety Committee responses may be published in Crucible, particularly if the information is deemed of general interest to other STAO members. Anonymity, however, will be guaranteed.

school, and a fairly substantial fine could result.

Although the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* does not apply to students, it would be good practice to apply the above regulations to them also. Accordingly, when experiments involving food are carried out, it is worth arranging for the class to be transferred to some other area (e.g. home economics room, or school cafeteria) for the science lesson,

especially if the food is to be tasted. This may seem a nuisance but it minimizes the risks and also reinforces the special nature of science laboratories in the students' minds.

Perhaps you should recommend to the Health and Safety Committee of your local District School Board that this safety issue be clearly addressed in their written safety policy, if this has not already been done.



EnviroCareers review (...continued from page 24)

covering the latest environment employment trends. Features include career profiles, employment statistics and CCHREI youth program updates.

- Professional Development Centre – an online database of training and professional development.
- Copies of the product can be ordered on-line as well, in case you have not seen the copy that was sent to your school in the spring of 2001.

This package is an excellent resource for Guidance counselors to inform students about the astounding wealth of careers that are related to concern for the environment. But how can you as a Science teacher use this resource? Here are some suggestions:

- Encourage your Guidance department to get this package.
- Show the video to introduce the con-

cept that there are a host of environment-related career opportunities.

- Let students individually browse the booklet to explore careers of interest.
- Students may also browse the CD-ROM on an individual computer or the school's Intranet or online.
- Teach a series of lessons on enviro-career related topics using the *Facilitator's Guide*. Use the curriculum matrix to find lessons that best fit your particular course.
- Finally, send your school's guidance department a copy of this article so they can order this resource and make it available to all students.

Enjoy this free product and use it to enrich your science teaching. You will help your students see the relevance of what they are learning for their own future and for the good of the earth.

