INTRODUCTION
Many programs at Tulane University use animals to study the origin and treatment of disease and to better understand biology and life sciences. This brochure contains health and safety information to help protect you from hazards associated with animal care and research.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND HAZARDS?
Working with or around research animals and animal wastes can expose workers to health and safety risks. Risk is dependent upon the frequency, duration, and extent of contact with animals or animal wastes. The most common risk of working with or around research animals is development of or worsening of allergies. In addition, although humans usually are not susceptible to animal diseases, there are some important exceptions where transmission of an infection from an animal to a human can cause serious illness.

HAZARD CATEGORIES
Hazards associated with the care and use of research animals can be divided into five broad categories:

A) Bites and Scratches
Personnel who work directly with research animals may be at risk of being bitten or scratched. This is why a current tetanus vaccination is recommended for all persons with animal contact. Personnel should be trained in appropriate animal handling and restraint techniques. All personnel should also be familiar with first aid procedures.

B) Allergens
Animal allergy can result from direct skin contact or from the inhalation of allergens contained in animal fur, dander, serum, or other body fluids. Secondary or indirect exposure from soiled clothing, animal cages, bedding, research equipment, etc. can also lead to the development of allergies.

Symptoms of allergic reaction vary depending on the severity of the reaction and can include: itchy eyes and skin, rashes, runny nose, sneezing, nasal congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, etc. If you develop allergy symptoms or if allergy symptoms worsen while working with animals, notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

C) Protocol Related Hazards
Protocol-related hazards may be associated with either routine operations or experiment-specific protocols. Hazards can include radioactive materials, flammable materials, infectious agents, toxins, or toxic chemicals (including carcinogens and pharmaceutical agents).

Successful control of protocol-related hazards requires recognition and description of the hazards prior to the start of the experiments. This is primarily the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) although the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS), the Institutional Biosafety Committee and the Radiation Safety Committee may review protocol hazards as needed. Use of the proper facilities and equipment, personal protective equipment, and personnel training can control or eliminate most hazards.
D) Zoonoses
Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Although there are a variety of zoonotic agents that animal researchers should be aware of, it is more likely for a person to injure or contaminate themselves from an experiment mishap in the lab than to contract a disease from an animal.

E) Inherent Hazards
There are some potential hazards inherent in any work environment. These include poor ergonomics, slips and falls, electrical safety hazards, etc. The Tulane University Environmental Health & Safety Policies and Procedures Manual addresses many of these potential hazards. Additional information may be obtained from the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS). [http://tulane.edu/oehs/](http://tulane.edu/oehs/)

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS
There are steps that you can take to reduce the risks of infection and injury when working with or around research animals. General cleanliness and hand washing after working with animals or animal wastes is essential. Do not eat, chew gum or tobacco, drink, store food, apply cosmetics or smoke in any laboratory or animal facility. Use extra care when using needles or sharp objects; discard them directly into a “sharps” container without recapping.

**People handling animals should always protect themselves by:**
- wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing, e.g., gloves, lab coat or disposable gown, head cover/bonnet, respirator (if necessary), and shoe covers,
- learning how to properly handle and restrain the animal,
- never re-capping needles,
- observing all room signage,
- immediately washing any animal bite or scratch with disinfectant soap, and
- seeking medical attention following an injury.

**People working with hazardous agents should take additional precautions by:**
- using a biological safety cabinet when handling infectious materials,
- using a fume hood when handling toxic materials,
- decontaminating (by autoclaving or chemical disinfection) non-disposable materials before washing or reuse,
- placing biologically contaminated materials in biohazard bag for incineration or autoclave, and
- reviewing the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for hazardous chemicals, and
- following proper procedures for handling and disposal of radioactive materials.

BASIC SAFETY PRECAUTIONS
Here are some basic safety precautions that apply to all work environments regardless of the types of hazardous materials used:
- Do not recap needles; dispose of them in appropriate sharp containers.
- Wash hands before eating, smoking, or leaving the animal work area.
- Do not eat, drink or store food in research areas.
- Read and understand any special safety requirements for each work area or animal species (e.g. non-human primates).
- Follow applicable safety precautions.
- Clean all spills immediately.
- Dispose of all waste materials into the appropriate waste stream.

Report all incidents or equipment malfunctions to your supervisor immediately.
WHAT IS THE ANIMAL HANDLER HEALTH SURVEILLANCE (AHHS) PROGRAM?
The AHHS Program is designed to promote a safe work environment by minimizing the risk of illness or injury associated with working with or around research animals. Participation in the AHHS Program requires completion of a Risk Assessment & History Form (RAHF).

Who Must Participate in the AHHS Program?
All personnel (faculty, staff, students, visitors) whose duties involve exposure to animals, animal waste, or animal tissues at any Tulane facilities are included in this program. This includes personnel in non-research units, such as Facilities Service (maintenance, custodial, plant operations) who, by virtue of their need to access all facilities on campus, may find themselves exposed to research animals.

Additional information on the AHHS program and animal research can be found on the OEHS website. http://tulane.edu/oehs/ocsafety/animalhandler.cfm

IN CASE OF INJURY OR ILLNESS
Response and reporting procedures for injuries or illnesses may vary depending upon the facility or location as well as the person’s affiliation with Tulane. In all cases, if someone has a serious injury, contact Tulane Police immediately. (TU Police will call 911 if deemed necessary.)

Tulane Employees
Employees who suffer a work-related injury/illness (even if medical treatment is not needed) must report the incident to their supervisor immediately and complete a First Report of Occupational Injury/Illness (FROI). The completed FROI must be submitted to OEHS Workers Compensation (fax 504-988-2196) within 24-48 hours of the incident. Delays in reporting could jeopardize Workers’ Compensation benefits.

If the injury is not serious or life-threatening but still requires medical attention, the employee should proceed to the nearest clinic/hospital or to their personal physician for evaluation and treatment. (At TNPRC, go to Occupational Health.) A copy of the FROI should be taken to the medical care facility. Registration personnel should be informed that the visit is work-related and is covered by Workers’ Compensation. Personal health insurance should NOT be used for treatment of work-related injuries.

Tulane Students
If the injury/illness occurs during classroom activities, the course instructor should be notified immediately and a Student Report of On-Campus Environmental Injury or Disease form should be completed. A copy of the report should be forwarded to the OEHS regardless of whether or not the student seeks medical evaluation.

Visitors (includes contract personnel & non-Tulane affiliates)
Immediately notify Tulane Police of any injury or illness involving visitors.