

Back to the Lab After Extended Closure Fact Sheet

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNO has been closed for a substantial amount of time. Here are some things to consider when you start to work in the lab again.

▶▶▶ **Emergency Equipment:** In the absence of the lab operating, some of the required tests and inspections of the emergency equipment may have lapsed. If your fire extinguisher hasn't been checked in the past month, please email safety@uno.edu to get it inspected. Make sure your [safety shower](#) and [eyewash station](#) get tested as soon as possible, and document the tests on their respective logs. Ensure your handwashing sink is equipped with soap and paper towels that may have been used up.

▶▶▶ **Expired & Legacy Chemicals:** Depending on the length of time you've been away from the lab, some of your chemical products may now be expired. Go through your chemical inventory and bring the expired chemicals to the hazardous waste room as soon as possible. If you come across legacy chemicals (chemicals from previous occupants that have been in the lab for several years), please contact the UNO Lab Safety Officer at labsafety@uno.edu. If you come across any peroxide-forming chemicals or other explosive chemicals, please contact the UNO Lab Safety Officer at labsafety@uno.edu immediately and do not touch the chemicals.

▶▶▶ **Temperature-Controlled Chemicals or Biological Materials:** Although there has been no reporting of loss of power, UNO may have decided to turn the temperature up slightly to save energy while they are unoccupied. Make sure you check your temperature-controlled chemicals and biological materials before use. If there are indicators that they have experienced a change in temperature, such as a slight change in color or particulate suspension, bring chemicals to the hazardous waste room and order replacements. Dispose of biological materials as biohazardous waste.

Common Peroxide-Forming Chemicals in the Lab

| Chemical Name | CAS # |
|--|------------|
| Ethyl & Diethyl Ether | 60-29-7 |
| 1,4-Dioxane | 123-91-1 |
| 1,3-Butadiene | 106-99-0 |
| Chlorobutadiene (Chloroprene) | 126-99-8 |
| Divinyl Acetylene | 821-08-9 |
| Isopropyl Ether | 108-20-3 |
| Potassium Amide | 17242-52-3 |
| Potassium Metal | 7440-09-7 |
| Sodium Amide | 7782-92-5 |
| Tetrafluoroethylene | 116-14-3 |
| Vinylidene Chloride | 75-35-4 |
| Acetal | 105-57-7 |
| Cumene | 68553-94-6 |
| Cyclohexene | 110-83-8 |
| Cyclooctene | 931-87-3 |
| Cyclopentene | 142-29-0 |
| Diacetylene | 74-86-2 |
| Dicyclopentadiene | 77-73-6 |
| Diethylene Glycol Dimethyl Ether (Diglyme) | 111-96-6 |
| Dioxane (p-Dioxane) | 123-91-1 |
| Ethylene Glycol Dimethyl Ether (Glyme) | 110-71-4 |
| Furan | 110-00-9 |
| Methyl Acetylene | 74-99-7 |
| Methyl Cyclopentane | 96-37-7 |
| Methyl-Isobutyl Ketone | 108-10-1 |
| Tetrahydrofuran | 109-99-9 |
| Tetrahydronaphthalene | 119-64-2 |
| Ethyl Vinyl Ether | 109-92-2 |
| Acrylic Acid | 79-10-7 |
| Butadiene | 106-99-0 |
| Chlorotrifluoroethylene | 79-38-9 |
| Ethyl Acrylate | 140-88-5 |
| Methyl Methacrylate | 80-62-6 |
| Styrene | 100-42-5 |
| Vinyl Acetate | 108-05-4 |
| Vinyl Chloride | 75-01-4 |
| Vinyl Pyridine | 100-69-6 |

Note: This is not a complete list of peroxide-forming chemicals that may be used in the lab.



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▶▶▶ **Funding:** Many labs most likely experienced financial loss during the UNO closure. If this is the case, labs should track expenses related to COVID-19. Labs can estimate loss of revenue and the costs associated with an idle lab. Some examples of associated costs are: coolant that is required to be used but the lab was idle, samples lost due to expiration or temperature change, chemicals lost due to expiration or temperature change, etc. Grants may be eligible for replacement costs by sponsors. The general fund may be eligible for reimbursement from the state or FEMA. If this is the case for your lab, please email researchoffice@uno.edu.

▶▶▶ **Mental Health & Morale:** Although you are coming back to the lab and getting back into your “normal” routine, many of us have personally been affected or have known someone who has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. If you feel as though you are unable to safely work in a lab due to depression, lethargy, or other reasons, please contact your supervisor to discuss your options and contact UNO Counseling Services at 504-280-6683. We are all in this together!

Additional mental health resources include:

- Keep Calm During Covid-19 24/7 phone line at 1-866-310-7977
- SAMHSA’s National 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-662-4357
- National Domestic Abuse 24/7 Hotline at 1-800-799-7233

▶▶▶ **Plan Ahead:** Now that we’ve experienced this, it’s time to create a plan for if this happens in the future. Here are some items to gather in case of another emergency shutdown:

- Identify all non-critical activities that can be ramped down or suspended in the future.
- Identify primary and backup personnel available to safely perform essential activities in the future.
- Create a contact list of lab personnel (PI, lab manager, graduate assistants, students, and others). Include personal cell information as they will be unable to answer a work phone. Make sure this is kept up-to-date as lab personnel changes.
- Make sure the contact list is available in a place where everyone can easily access it.
- Make sure lab signage is up-to-date with emergency contacts and hazards in case there is an emergency while everyone is away. Use the [Lab Signage Request Form](#) when there are any changes in the lab.
- Don’t overbuy chemicals. Purchasing in bulk is discouraged for several reasons, including increasing risk for essential personnel while lab personnel are away and an increase in hazardous waste.
- Purchase chemicals from vendors that will allow you to cancel orders and receive refunds easily.
- Ensure items are all labeled and stored properly. If a disaster occurs and the building is compromised, emergency personnel need to know what risks are present. Store glass containers and any liquids in secondary containment. Store chemicals by compatibility. Flammables must be stored in a flammable cabinet. Acids and bases should be stored in separate corrosive cabinets. Lids to all chemicals, samples, and waste containers must be closed and secured at all times.
- Ensure the lab’s chemical inventory is up-to-date at all times.
- Ensure peroxide-forming chemicals are dated when they were opened and these dates are listed in the chemical inventory.

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- Ensure unstable chemicals or compounds that need to be kept wetted (ex. Picric Acid) are noted on the chemical inventory.
- Ensure your chemical inventory reflects DEA-controlled substances and their exact quantities. This includes syringes and needles, and toxins of biological origin. Make sure all DEA-controlled substances are secured at all times so that no unauthorized person has access.
- Ensure all sharps are stored in a manner that they would not damage anyone during an earthquake or other emergency.
- Ensure all radioactive material is stored properly and secured.
- Ensure biosafety cabinets and fume hoods are kept clear.
- Ensure gas cylinders are stored properly and secured.
- Make sure lab personnel know how to clog gas valves and shut off gas to the area.
- Make sure lab personnel know how to turn off all appliances and equipment.
- Make sure refrigerator and freezer doors can be properly sealed without leakage.
- Make sure all lab equipment that requires uninterrupted electrical power is connected to an Uninterrupted Power Supply and/or emergency power.
- Ensure lab staff know how to lock all entrances to the lab while ensuring emergency staff may have access if required.