Ames Blue Alert- Potential High Voltage Exposure

February 4, 2005

Lessons Learned Summary

1. Prototypical experimental set-ups need to have the same level of evaluation and safety as approved operations.
2. Approval for set-up and testing of new systems is accomplished through the Readiness Review process.
3. New and visiting employees may not fully understand the need for approval from line management for developing new ideas to the prototype stage. Supervisors must provide adequate oversight to ensure all requirements are fulfilled.

Discussion:

A visiting scientist had an idea for a new process, and approached the Program Director to ask if a laser system in a nearby lab might be used with the new process. The Program Director agreed the laser system was available when not in use for other projects, but the details of the new process were not discussed. The approval for the new process was not discussed by either party. The visiting scientist began borrowing, building and assembling apparatus until a prototype of the system was constructed. He then sought out the Program Director and invited him to take a look at the prototype. Upon entering the lab, the Program Director recognized an exposed high voltage contact (3K V; 0-10mA) on the top of the system, and realized the system had not been through Readiness Review. The Program Director had the system de-energized, and reported the finding to ESH&A. A Readiness Review for the system was initiated immediately. The Laboratory Director initiated an investigation.

Recommended Actions:

- All activities require Readiness Review before assembling and energizing apparatus.
- Group Leaders and Program Directors must ensure the new processes, chemicals, and equipment are evaluated against the existing approved activities.
- A substantial change may require re-opening an existing Readiness Review.
- New processes, chemicals and equipment may require initiating a new Readiness Review.

Hazard: Electrical

ISM Core Function: Analyze the Hazards, Develop and Implement Hazard Controls, Perform Work Within Controls

Reference: Occurrence Report CH--AMES-AMES-2005-0001

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