

Ames Green Lessons Learned

Date: June 2, 2008

Title: Old radioactive material samples found in laboratory

Discussion: Preparation for lab renovation work includes performing radiological surveys of laboratory equipment and materials whether going to the warehouse for re-use or recycling. While cleaning out a lab space in the basement of Spedding Hall for demolition/renovation, ESH&A staff were going through cabinets and drawers and performing routine radiological surveys. Samples of tantalite ore (12 envelopes and one vial) dated in the 1940's were discovered that were not labeled to today's standards. Markings on each envelope indicated differing percentages of uranium. Each sample was surveyed, bagged, labeled properly and are now in ESH&A custody. The material as found presented no radiation exposure hazard to laboratory personnel, but poorly labeled samples can pose unidentified hazards.

Resolution/Recommended Action: Group Leaders are encouraged to review lab spaces for radioactive research materials that are unmarked or improperly labeled. As with chemicals, ESH&A requires researchers to update their inventory of radioactive materials annually, and to have an accurate understanding of all research samples in their respective labs. For assistance with labeling and/or disposal of radioactive materials, call Mike McGuigan, Radiation Safety Officer, @ 4-7922.