

Please report all accidents and near misses. Things happen and it is important to learn from others. Environmental Health and Safety and your colleagues appreciate hearing about incidents, reviewing their causes and learning from them.

INAPPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR IN LABS

The following are incidents that occurred at institutions around the country resulting from inappropriate footwear worn in laboratories. Always wear closed toe shoes as part of your personal protective equipment every time you enter a lab.

Accidents and Near Misses

An academic researcher was checking an inventory of supplies in a minus-20 degree freezer, wearing long pants and sandals, as they were not performing lab work that day. A plastic conical tube fell from the door shelving onto the floor and shattered, splashing her exposed feet. Fortunately, the contents were not harmful and the researcher was unaffected, but it is an example of how you can still be involved in a lab accident/exposure regardless of if you are performing typical lab activities.



A student dropped a two-liter aspirator flask of tissue culture media on her foot while wearing sandals. This incident required a trip to the emergency room and many stitches.

A researcher pulled a two-liter flask of hot agar out of an autoclave and bumped the bottom of the flask against the lip causing it to break. Boiling agar spilled over her bare legs and feet. She received second and third degree burns.

A biology graduate student was mixing several solutions of nitric acid/alcohol in plastic bottles to use as a cleaning solution for glassware. He was wearing shorts and sandals along with a lab coat that went down to his mid-calf. The pressure buildup in one of the bottles caused a rupture, causing severe burns on his lower legs, feet and neck. This illustrates why long pants are required under lab coats.

A researcher wearing sandals accidentally kicked a piece of glassware, causing a six-inch laceration and requiring stitches on her foot.

A graduate student dropped a four-liter bottle of sulfuric acid at his feet. Fortunately, the bottle only contained one liter of acid and the graduate student was wearing proper shoes. If he had been wearing sandals, his feet would have been drenched in concentrated sulfuric acid.

This photo shows the result of a researcher who was wearing flip flops in a lab when an acid spill occurred.



These injuries occurred in laboratories throughout the U.S. in the last 20 years and were compiled and shared by members of the American Biological Safety Association (ABSA).