LASER POINTER POLICY

Laser pointers are widely used on campus to highlight specific information during a lecture or presentation. Laser pointers are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH). The power of these devices is limited in the USA to 5 mW in the visible range (400 to 700 nm). This makes the laser pointer a class 3R laser. Research has demonstrated that laser pointers conforming to these specifications can be used safely in the classroom.

Lasers from 2 to 200 mW are readily available on the internet in a variety of colors and may be marketed as laser pointers! Anything exceeding 5 mW is a class 3B laser and it is illegal in the USA to promote such devices as laser pointers! Class 3B lasers are capable of causing eye injuries when exposed to the beam. These lasers are also powerful enough to burn some materials and initiate fires. Some foreign made laser pointers are poorly made and in some instances the on/off switches have failed, resulting in accidents. All laser pointers approved for sale in the USA will be labeled (see label below).

Using a laser pointer? Never point it at another human and never look directly into the beam. Never aim a laser pointer at a reflective surface. Do not view a laser pointer using an optical instrument such as a microscope or binocular.

When buying a laser pointer be sure it is FDA/CDRH approved. We strongly suggest the purchase of a class 2 laser pointer with a wavelength of 630 to 680 nm. Power output must not exceed 5 mW. It should have a danger or caution label indicating power output, wavelength and aperture indicator. Be sure before you buy! If you do receive one that is not properly labeled, return it for a refund!

Remember that state law prohibits use of laser pointers by those less than 18 years of age without adult supervision! Have a laser pointer that does not have labels? Are you sure it is less than 5 mW output? Need help or have questions on any laser safety issues? Call EHS, Laser Safety at 737-2832 or send an e-mail to lasersafety@yale.edu(link sends e-mail) for assistance.