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What Would Your Mother Think About Your Laboratory?

My mom gave me many rules to live by as a child. Some very simple such as: "Put things back where you got them when you are finished using them" and "Clean your mess up when you are finished" or the ever famous "Leave things like you found them." Although she did not know it at the time, these rules are an important and often forgotten key to laboratory safety.

I have walked into laboratories and found dirty glassware piled high, unused chemicals lying around, stains on floors and other signs of poor laboratory safety practice. Although these messes would upset any parent if they found their child's room in the same disarray, it goes beyond this. Failure to maintain a clean and clutter free work environment increases the likelihood for an accident to occur in your laboratory.



The photographs above were taken in a laboratory where an accidental spill occurred. Although these photographs represent a very small segment of the laboratory can you see the trouble lurking behind the mess?

Below are some easy steps to improve safety in your laboratory:

- Replace all chemicals and reagents when you are finished. Ensure all chemical containers are sealed and stored properly by hazard class.
- Clean or dispose of dirty glassware at the end of your work day.
- Don't store chemicals on the floor or above eye level.
- Don't stack chemicals on top of each other.
- Remove all chemicals and containers that are not actively in use from the fume hood.
- Immediately clean up any spills or leaks. If it is a hazardous chemical spill then follow the chemical spill response found in our Emergency Procedures Manual.

By following the steps above you can improve the appearance of your laboratory while making it a safer place to work. Take a look around your laboratory and ask yourself: What would mom think about your laboratory?

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"Don't Learn Laboratory Safety by Accident!"