

# SAFETY NEWSLETTER

14 October 2024 - Vol 1.

Safety Tips

Announcements

DSC spotlight

Lessons learned



Thom Opal, Bakar Bioengineer Hub

## Safety Spotlight

**Thom Opal**

*DSC for Bakar Labs & Stanley Hall*

As the Safety Specialist for Bakar Labs in the Bakar Bioengineer Hub and the QB3 Institute in Stanley Hall, Thom Opal has built a comprehensive safety program for industry tenants that lease UC Berkeley building spaces. Thom helps companies integrate safe practices that drive transformative discoveries and innovative research.

[Continue to Full Interview >](#)

### Waste Disposal

Routine waste  
will not be  
charged to units

### Laser Safety Vendor Fair

Oct 24, 2024  
Tan Hall 775  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

### Chem Safety Policy

Ductless fume hood are  
not permitted on campus

### Safety Tip

Biohazard waste disposal  
This month's safety tip directs your attention to "[biohazard waste disposal](#)" on our EH&S webpage. Review the protocol to ensure all employees are properly trained on biohazard waste disposal procedures.

Get in touch if you or your tenants have questions.

**Lab Safety Program:**  
[labsafety@berkeley.edu](mailto:labsafety@berkeley.edu)

**Hazardous Waste Program:**  
[hwp@berkeley.edu](mailto:hwp@berkeley.edu)

### 21st Annual Vendor Fair

Latest innovations in  
lasers and optics.

Join us on Thursday, October 24, 2024 for the 21st annual Laser Safety Vendor Fair, an all-star showcase of the best in lasers, optics, and safety.

Come meet vendors and industry experts, and enjoy a unique opportunity to network with researchers across the UC Berkeley campus!

**More info:**  
[ehs.berkeley.edu/lsvf](https://ehs.berkeley.edu/lsvf)

**Laser Safety Officer:**  
[Iso@berkeley.edu](mailto:Iso@berkeley.edu)

### MEET AN EH&S PRO



**Ingrid Castro Rodriguez, PhD**

*Associate Director of Health & Safety:* Ingrid is a people-first leader with expertise in strategic planning, business operations, regulatory compliance, chemistry, industrial hygiene, organizational development, talent management, and project & program management. She is committed to enhancing UC Berkeley safety programs and to empowering and inspiring the Health & Safety team to reach their full potential.

# Safety Spotlight

**Thom Opal, Full Interview**

## Tell us about yourself.

My name is Thom Opal, and I am currently the Safety Specialist for the QB3 Institute in Stanley Hall and for Bakar Labs in the Bakar Bioengineer Hub (former University Art Museum site). I am a Bay Area native who began working at UC Berkeley when I was an undergraduate in the Department of Botany. My lab safety awareness began when I worked in a molecular mycology lab where I was excited to learn about brand new PCR techniques directly from the inventor. After graduating from UC Berkeley continued on as a Staff Research Associate. My career path brought me through many different positions at Berkeley. I spent over nine years as the Berkeley Chemical Safety Specialist at EH&S, where I managed the chemical inventory database and initiated the first chemical hazard door sign program. During my time at EH&S I sought to learn the breadth of EH&S topics including: fire safety and building code, industrial hygiene, hazardous waste and environmental regulations, radiation and biological safety, etc. I drew upon my extensive background to become a full-spectrum Safety Specialist and have been in my current position at QB3 in Stanley Hall for nearly 18 years. During my time with QB3 I have taken on many additional assignments in my Safety Specialist role for the Energy Biosciences Institute, Li Ka Shing Center, Innovative Genomics Institute, and Bakar Bioengineer Hub.

## What are three career accomplishments you are proud of?

1. Bringing detailed chemical hazard awareness to the layperson as well as to emergency responders.
2. Pioneering a comprehensive safety program for non-UCB tenants leasing UCB building spaces, utilizing a thorough hazard assessment and offering detailed compliance assistance while onboarding these private industry companies.
3. Organizing department and building safety networks where I have fostered active communication and collaborative participation in safety culture.

## What motivates you?

I find great satisfaction in making positive and unique contributions to the broader research communities. My career path has allowed me to plumb rare depths of geeky detail while tempering and balancing this with daily interactions with a wide variety of people. I really enjoy the kind of relationship building my role demands, as well as the technical expertise I am called upon to provide.

## What do you like to do in your spare time?

I am an avid guitar player and composer. I love hiking and discovering new delights in nature. And I truly enjoy every turn in the journey of parenting my two daughters.

## What is the book you gift the most and why?

I have gifted several copies of "Braiding Sweetgrass." The author, Robin Wall Kimmerer, draws lessons from plant sciences and ecology, and eloquently weaves them with revelations of her indigenous culture, celebrating the gifts of generosity and great gratitude. I am inspired by this book whenever I revisit it or share it with someone new.

## Lesson Learned

Fortunately, there were no safety incidents reported during this past month.

### Fume hoods

#### DO NOT REACH IN

A researcher reached too far into the fume hood, exposing herself to hazardous fumes. She felt dizzy, but her symptoms resolved quickly. The laboratory re-arranged the fume hood set-up, placing brackets in the back for ergonomic reach.



Fume Hoods in a laboratory

### Red waste

#### Labeling & Containing.

Red waste must be contained in rigid plastic labeled with biohazard symbols on all sides and closed. Red bags MUST not be left outside secondary containment.

To dispose of red waste go to the HWP and request a pickup. Or drop in your consolidation area.



Labeled Hazardous Waste

### Safety Reminders

- Visit the [DSC web page](#) for more news & alerts.
- Complete lab safety [self-inspections](#).

# ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

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## Environment, Health & Safety's First Newsletter edition!

We are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all employees, and your role as safety coordinators is instrumental in achieving this goal.

### Department Safety Coordinators (DSCs)

DSCs take part in department, college, or facility management by coordinating, implementing, and documenting safety programs that support UC Berkeley research, teaching, and learning operations..

We commend all employees for their commitment to safety and remind everyone to observe safety protocols and report any potential hazards.

Please encourage all employees to participate and take advantage of these valuable training opportunities.

To submit your safety tips, lessons learned, or any other topic you would like to discuss or to contribute to the next newsletter, please [use this form](#) and submit by **December 15, 2024**.

Thank you for your dedication to safety and for your continued efforts in ensuring a safe workplace for all.

With gratitude and appreciation,

**Ingrid Castro Rodriguez**

Associate Director of Health & Safety

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this Newsletter](#)