

## Lab Policy and Procedure

### MHPC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT PROGRAM

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Subject: Lab

Number: 602

**Title:** Procedure for Lab Operations During Heat or Air Conditioning Malfunction

Date: 01/21/2025

Reviewed/Revised: 01/21/2025

**Purpose:** To outline the steps and procedures to follow in the event that the heating or air conditioning (HVAC) system in the MHPC Lab is not functioning properly, ensuring the safety, comfort, and productivity of lab users.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all personnel working within the MHPC Lab, including researchers, staff, and students.

#### **Procedure:**

##### 1. Immediate Response to HVAC Malfunction

- a. Assessment of Situation
  - i. Upon noticing a malfunction (either heating or cooling), check the HVAC system status via available indicators (thermostats, control panels, etc.).
  - ii. If possible, attempt basic troubleshooting) e.g., check if thermostat settings are correct or if the power has been disrupted).
- b. Notify Lab Manager/Administrator
  - i. Contact the lab manager or administrator immediately to report the HVAC malfunction.
  - ii. Provide details about the malfunction, including the symptoms (too hot, too cold, no air circulation, etc.).
  - iii. Contact the following at each location:
    1. SFCC: Facilities Maintenance at 660-596-7200
    2. ECC: Nancy Mitchell, Dean of Health Science, (636) 584-6619 or Julie Beck, Program Assistant, 636-584-6616
    3. MACC: Aleesha Coke, Director of Site Operations at Columbia Campus, (573) 234-1067 x 12115 or Michelle Frey, Dean of Health Sciences, (660) 263-4100 x 11249
- c. Evaluate Work Conditions
  - i. If the lab temperature becomes uncomfortable (too hot or too cold) and is affecting your ability to work safely, cease nonessential activities.
  - ii. Avoid performing any work that could be negatively impacted by extreme temperature (e.g., delicate experiments or equipment sensitive to temperature).

##### 2. Temporary Mitigation Measures

- a. Alternative Cooling/Heating Measures
  - i. For cooling

1. If the HVAC system is malfunctioning and the temperature is rising, use portable fans (if available) to improve airflow.
    2. If the temperature exceeds 85°F (29°C) or higher, consider relocating to a cooler area if possible.
  - ii. For heating
    1. If the HVAC system fails to provide heat and the temperature drops below 65°F (18°C), use space heaters (if available and safe to use in the lab).
    2. If using space heaters, ensure they are placed in safe locations, away from flammable materials.
  - b. Clothing and Personal Comfort
    - i. Wear appropriate clothing for temperature control, such as layering to add warmth or using cooling wear such as personal fans or cooling towels.
    - ii. If necessary, take breaks to avoid prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures.
3. Reporting and Documentation
  - a. Document the Incident
    - i. The lab manager or administrator will log the HVAC malfunction in the lab maintenance record, noting the date, time, and nature of the issue.
    - ii. If the malfunction is recurring or affects lab operations for extended periods, a formal work order should be submitted to facilities management.
  - b. Follow-up
    - i. The lab manager will ensure that the HVAC issue is reported to the relevant facilities maintenance team for repair.
    - ii. Regular updates should be provided to lab users regarding the status of repairs.
4. Safety Considerations
  - a. Workplace Safety
    - i. If temperatures reach levels that could cause harm (e.g., extreme heat or cold), lab activities should cease until temperatures stabilize within safe ranges.
    - ii. In case of extreme heat, monitor for symptoms of heat exhaustion (headache, dizziness, excessive sweating, etc.) and ensure hydration breaks are regularly taken.
  - b. Equipment Safety
    - i. Some lab equipment may be sensitive to temperature changes. Ensure that temperature-sensitive experiments or equipment are monitored, and take appropriate steps to mitigate damage (e.g., move sensitive equipment to a more stable environment).
5. Escalation Procedures
  - a. Extended Malfunction
    - i. If the HVAC system is down for more than 24 hours, a temporary relocation of lab activities may be necessary. The lab manager will consult with affected personnel to determine the best course of action.
    - ii. Options may include moving experiments to other available labs, working remotely (if feasible), or rescheduling non-urgent work.
  - b. Emergency Situations
    - i. In the event of extreme temperature conditions that pose an immediate health risk, evacuate the lab immediately. Prioritize personnel safety and notify the lab manager and facilities maintenance team of the situation.
6. Prevention and Maintenance
  - a. Regular HVAC Maintenance
    - i. Facilities management will perform routine checks and maintenance on the HVAC system to prevent malfunctions. A regular maintenance schedule should be established and adhered to.
  - b. User Awareness

- i. Lab Users are encouraged to report any issues with temperature control immediately, even if minor, to ensure early intervention and prevent further complications.