

The Columbia University EH&S Merger Experience

Presenter(s)

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Abstract Text

Over the past 2 years, Columbia University's Environmental Health and Safety Department has undergone several major structural and practical changes, including a merger of the Medical Center Campus' Environmental Health and Safety Office with the Morningside Campus' Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Office. The merger more than doubled the size of the overall staff, changed the department's leadership structure and overall organization, and added and changed individual responsibilities for all staff.

This change came at a time when the University was already managing the outcomes of an EPA audit at each campus. The programmatic changes brought about as a result of the audit findings, as well as the demands of the constantly changing regulatory environment of New York City, have made this a challenging transition. Staff members involved in the management of hazardous waste, laboratory safety, fire and life safety, industrial hygiene, radiation safety and biological safety have all been impacted.

This presentation will examine the structural and programmatic changes required as a result of the department's growth and change. We will focus on the necessary collaborations across program areas as a result of a major change to local fire department policy, an increased demand for environmental, health, and safety services by the research community, and greater community scrutiny due to a planned campus expansion.

Presenter Bio(s)

Steven Berman, Laboratory Safety Officer with Columbia University. Graduate of Cornell University with a B.S. in Molecular and Cell Biology. Five years of professional experience in Environmental Health and Safety at Cornell and Columbia.

Lauren Kelly, Hazardous Materials Specialist with Columbia University since April 2006. Environmental Science and Chemistry graduate of East Stroudsburg University with over 9 years of hazardous waste project management experience pertaining to reactive chemical stabilization, radioactive and mixed waste disposal and processing.

Christopher Pitoscia, Laboratory Safety Officer and Assistant Biological Safety Officer, Columbia University. B.S. Environmental Management and Public Policy, University of Vermont, May, 2000. Five years professional experience as a private sector hazardous materials chemist and member of the CU Environmental Health and Safety Team.