

Some School Chemical Safety History in New Hampshire:

In 2004, the State of NH developed a high school chemistry lab hazardous waste clean out that assisted several towns. This has not been done again in the 20+ intervening years, and due to limited funding in New Hampshire, it is unlikely that the state will provide further similar assistance to schools.

Teachers consistently leave, and new teachers acquire chemicals and toxic art supplies without inventorying what was already purchased by previous teachers. The older chemicals are typically pushed to the back of shelves. This has been found repeatedly at many schools. The years of accumulation can have disastrous results with unknown chemicals stored inappropriately with other incompatible chemicals creating potential for fire, toxic gas, or explosions. It is not uncommon to find chemical containers with crystals forming around the caps indicating the escape of the chemical leading to potential hazards.

The NH Department of Education, Safe and Healthy Schools Educator has only one State inspector for approximately 550 public and private schools. They inspect as many schools as possible, but the problem issues remain rampant in the schools as there is no training to change behaviors and develop a safe, efficient, and sustainable protocol. They reported that in 2020, they inspected 112 schools and found several major problems in 13 science classrooms and 18 art classrooms.

In October 2023, the State of New Hampshire adopted Administrative Rule ED 320 for school facility approval which requires a Chemical Safety Hygiene Plan (CSHP) that identifies at a minimum the same requirements as the federal Occupational Exposures to Hazardous Chemicals in Laboratories standard from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). NH is not an OSHA state and develops its own standards which at a minimum must meet the OSHA standards.

The NH Administrative Rule includes language for “all science labs, automotive shops, and *other places where hazardous liquids or open flames are frequently used*.” It also includes language for a facility maintenance plan addressing custodial training, integrated pest management plan, and a healthy indoor air quality plan. This CSHP will include all departments having chemicals: art, automotive, biology, chemistry, custodial, industrial arts. This is critical as science labs have traditionally been the focus of chemical safety efforts and yet, other classrooms such as art studios use chemicals in projects with students.

Past School Chemical Safety Training Projects:

These projects were developed by UVLSRPC and primarily funded with grants from USDA and US EPA.

2012 – 2017 In-Person Trainings – In 2012, we hired Dave Waddell who developed the Rehab the Lab in King County, Washington to provide two full days of training to New Hampshire and Vermont schools at the River Valley Community College (RVCC) in Claremont, NH. In 2015, Dave came back and provided full day trainings for labs and art studios at RVCC. In 2017, Dave came back again and provided a full day training for lab safety at the RVCC and a half day training for art teachers and artists at AVA Gallery in Lebanon, NH.

2016 – School Site Visits – Dave Waddell visited 12 schools in our Region to evaluate the chemicals in the science labs, art studios, and custodial storage areas. He evaluated each area for container age and integrity, compatibility, hazards, and storage. Reports were provided to each school.

2023 More In-Person Trainings – UVLSRPC hired Becky Andersen of Hazardous Materials Consulting in Iowa to provide half-day trainings for lab safety and art studios at RVCC and at the Littleton, NH Opera House.

2024 – Live Webinars and School Visits - Becky provided 12 live one-hour webinars for us on School Chemical Safety. These were recorded and are available on our YouTube Channel. We also hired Maine Labpack to do on-site chemical evaluations at 10 schools – eight in our region and two in southern NH. See Resources box for link to recorded webinars.

2024 – Comic Books for School Chemical Hygiene Plans - UVLSRPC hired Marek Bennet, a New Hampshire Cartoonist to develop comic books for schoolteachers and administrators. Becky was his consultant, and together they developed four comic books: Chemical Safety in the Art Room; Identifying Hazardous Chemicals in the Classroom; Strategies for Science Safety (Checklists for Administrators); and How to Set Up a Chemical Safety & Hygiene Plan. You can access those comic books [here](#).

2026 – More Live Webinars - Becky provided 12 live webinars for School Chemical Safety which were recorded and are available on our YouTube Channel.