PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING ALARM ACTIVATION
DURING ANIMAL PROCEDURES

PERFORMANCE STANDARD: All persons shall work in safe and secure areas, and be protected from fire or other disasters that may befall the institution or facility.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to provide instruction and further clarification with respect to proper procedure during alarms and drills. This policy assures protection of human life, but also satisfies the IACUC with respect to animal life.

1. PHS Policy on the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, OPRR, 1996.
2. OLAW Web Site: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/
3. AAALAC Accreditation Guidelines: http://www.aaalac.org

BACKGROUND: During the course of normal activities involving animals in research, testing, or teaching, an alarm may sound which requires attention, response, and action. Generally, the action involves departing the area being alarmed. However, when animals are being used in research, there may be occasions when a balance between a real emergency, the potential for a real emergency, and the assurance of animal well-being must be considered. This is especially important when animals are anesthetized (e.g., surgery, CT scans, MRI units, etc.) or when animals, generally primates, are in restraining chairs or behavioral apparatus.

APPLICABILITY: This policy is only applicable when the fire alarm is activated during an anesthetized animal research procedure or when animals are out of their home cage (e.g., behavioral assessments, training). Research procedures on deceased animals or other animal components are not affected by this policy. All individuals working on deceased animals, animals in their home cage, or animal tissues are required to leave the area immediately upon alarm activation.

ROLES: ALL PERSONNEL WILL ASSURE HUMAN SAFETY IS THE PRIMARY FOCUS. Persons engaged in anesthesia or primate management will assure that another person is aware of their location and is committed to investigate the alarm, report to the incident commander (if one exists) the location of the individual, and if it is safe, return and retrieve the person left inside.
POLICY:

1. **SCHEDULED DRILLS**: The OESO Fire Safety Office will post notices of a scheduled fire drill at least 48 hours in advance stating the date and window of time the drill will occur. If an unavoidable conflict arises, the research personnel must notify the OESO Fire Safety office immediately. The main OESO office phone number will be posted on the notice. If no prior notification is given, and no anesthetized or alert restrained animals are being used, the drill will be held and all occupants are required to exit the building immediately!

2. **PREPARING FOR ALARMS**: In every laboratory, there will be a poster permanently displayed in a visible location which lists a building contact person, an alternate contact person, and their mobile phone numbers. The designated contact persons for fire alarm evacuations will be determined by the department(s). Alternates will also be determined. A list of contact persons and their cell phone numbers will be posted in animal procedural areas.

3. **PROCEDURES**: Procedures should not be initiated during periods of a scheduled drill (see item 1.). However, when unavoidable conflicts arise and an alarm is activated during animal procedures, research personnel shall first check the areas for signs for smoke, fire, toxins or other dangers:

   a. **Signs of danger (e.g., fire, smoke) noted**: Assess if the animal can be safely secured and removed from danger and notify DLAR veterinarians immediately. If the animal’s welfare cannot be protected without human risk, euthanize the anesthetized animals and leave the space.

   b. **No signs of danger noted**:

      i. Immediately contact a laboratory member and state that you are remaining in the laboratory because of an anesthetized or restrained animal.

      ii. The contacted laboratory member will continue to serve as a lookout person for signs for smoke, fire, or other hazards, and in charge of communications with the building contact person. The contact laboratory member is obligated to notify the building contact. This ensures proper accountability.

      iii. The building contact person will notify responding units of the person(s) remaining in the laboratory and their exact location.

      iv. The building contact person will notify the research personnel or his/her designee immediately if conditions deteriorate and evacuation is necessary.
v. If evacuation is necessary, the research personnel and his/her designee will safely and quickly euthanize the animal (e.g. perform a bilateral thoracotomy while anesthetized), and then evacuate the building immediately unless section c. is applicable.

vi. If the research personnel is alone when the alarm sounds: If no other persons are in the lab to serve as a laboratory designee, the research personnel staying with the animal must watch for signs of changing conditions to the best of his/her ability. The individual should page the DLAR veterinarian (919.970.9410) and/or the DLAR vet tech (919.970.2871). Any alarms after the initial alarm will require prompt evacuation from the building for all occupants.

c. SPECIAL NOTES REGARDING PRIMATES & OTHER ‘USDA COVERED SPECIES’: The use of primates or other high taxonomic species presents both extraordinary advantages and extraordinary concerns (e.g., animal well-being, zoonotic transmission, public distress, etc.). Unless there is clear evidence that the local area is under risk of fire, flooding, or other health risk conditions, the animal should not be removed from the test area. One individual should stay with the animal and assure its well-being, while a second individual investigates and reports to the building contact persons the conditions and situation of the animal and the animal handler.

If the animal (e.g., primate, dog, cat, swine, etc.) must be removed from the test area, DLAR veterinary staff shall provide for the needs of the animal (e.g., environmental conditions, safety, protection of animals and humans).