Dear Colleagues,

The NIH Office of Science Policy (NIH OSP) has announced the 3rd annual National Biosafety Month is coming in October. National Biosafety Month is a period during which institutions are encouraged to refocus their attention on biosafety policies, practices and procedures. Institutions should use National Biosafety Month as an opportunity to talk to investigators and research administrators about the importance of biosafety, raise awareness, and seek input on ways to strengthen institutional biosafety programs.

The theme of this year’s National Biosafety Month is: Evaluation, Collaboration, and Commitment.

In the spirit of these themes, I am asking PIs of research laboratories to:

- **Evaluate their biosafety program and practices.** Examples would be the review of laboratory specific biosafety manuals, ensure all individuals working in the laboratory are appropriately trained, conduct risk assessments for the agents in your lab, and practice spill cleanup procedures.

- **Collaborate with others to promote biosafety.** In laboratories that share space with other groups, make sure that all individuals working there are familiar with the risks associated with the agents that are being used, what are the signs and symptoms of exposure, and what is the appropriate personal protective equipment for working in the space. The Biosafety Office of the University of Utah is a valuable resource that should be used to discuss biosafety practices and procedures in your laboratory and is available to discuss risk assessments, containment procedures and measures to mitigate risk.

- **Remain committed to biosafety.** Ensure your laboratory staff are trained at least annually in biosafety practices and procedures. Regularly review laboratory standard operating procedures and safety manuals. The Biosafety Office offers a number of training opportunities for labs working with human materials or infectious agents, or shipping biological materials. Of note, individuals working with potentially infectious human materials, such as blood, tissue and cell lines (including those acquired from commercial labs), are required by OSHA to take bloodborne pathogen training annually.

Please contact the Biosafety Office if you have any questions or comments at 801-581-6590 or biosafety@oehs.utah.edu. Thank you for your efforts to maintain a safe working environment at the University of Utah.

Andrew S. Weyrich
Vice President for Research