

OSHA cites Nova Southeastern for safety violations



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OSHA has cited Nova Southeastern University for 10 safety violations in its anatomy lab that exposed workers to formaldehyde.

The federal agency said the Davie-based private university didn't provide personal protective equipment to workers exposed to formaldehyde, and exposed workers to formaldehyde levels beyond safe exposure limits.

When employees were exposed to injurious chemicals, the lab didn't provide an eye wash for flushing the eyes or body. NSU also didn't provide written notice to inform workers of actions taken to decrease exposure, the agency said.

Brandon Hensler, interim executive director of university relations for Nova Southeastern, said the health and safety of students, faculty and staff is the university's "utmost priority." The university is taking the OSHA complaint seriously, he said.

But Hensler said formaldehyde is an integral part of the learning experience at NSU's anatomy lab. "We have taken significant steps to address concerns and to ensure proper ventilation within the lab," he said.

He said NSU also has initiated large-scale renovations and will reopen the lab in June.

The site investigated by OSHA was in the Terry Building, 3200 S. University Drive.

"Formaldehyde can irritate the eyes and nose, and cause coughing and wheezing," said Beatriz Cabrera, acting director of OSHA's Fort Lauderdale-area office. "It is a sensitizer,

which means that it can cause allergic reactions of the lungs, skin and eyes, such as asthma, rashes and itching. It also has been linked to cancer."

The violations are considered "serious," which means there is a substantial probability that death or physical harm could result from the hazard, which the employer knew or should have known.

The complaint indicates that some faculty members were exposed to formaldehyde over the allowed limit, but doesn't say whether students were affected.

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OSHA began to investigate in November after receiving a complaint about faculty in the lab. NSU has 15 days to respond to OSHA by correcting the safety violations and paying a penalty of \$50,000, or contesting the allegations and requesting a conference with OSHA's area director.

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