

## Animal Care and Use Program Policy



### Walk-in Cage/Rack Washers and Bulk Sterilizers on Central/Waterfront and West Campuses

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#### Background

The purpose of this policy is to assure that safety procedures for cage/rack washers and bulk sterilizers are in place and used effectively by personnel in the Department of Comparative Medicine on Central/Waterfront (DCM-C) and West (DCM-W) Campuses. The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) has indicated that safety issues in use of this equipment must be addressed.

#### Scope

This policy applies to all DCM cage wash areas in which walk-in cage/ rack washers or bulk sterilizers are used.

#### Policy

There are three key factors that must be considered when developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for walk-in cage/rack washers and bulk sterilizers: 1) ease of egress, 2) a de-energizing mechanism, and 3) personnel training. The possibility of entrapment must be eliminated, and in the case of cage/rack washers, ideally an emergency shut-off mechanism that is easily accessible from anywhere inside the machine and which de-energizes the washer when activated should be in place. Proper instructional signage should be posted and equipment operators must receive appropriate training so as to minimize their risk.

#### Procedures

- I. DCM-C and DCM-W will develop SOPs for walk-in cage/rack washers and bulk sterilizers on their respective campus.
- II. The three key factors cited above, along with lockout/tagout and confined space procedures, must be considered when developing SOPs for this equipment.
- III. All personnel must receive appropriate documented training as outlined in the relevant SOP prior to working around or in walk-in cage/rack washers or bulk sterilizers.
- IV. The appropriate IACUC will review compliance with this policy semiannually during program review.
- V. SOPs must stipulate that shut off and de-energizing mechanisms will be periodically tested and the testing results documented.

#### Definitions

De-energize - indicates immediate flow stoppage of water into the interior of the cage washer, along with termination of the wash cycle such that restart requires deliberate reactivation of the machine. In the case of bulk sterilizers, this would involve immediate termination of the sterilization cycle, allowing immediate opening of the door/hatch and release of the person trapped therein.

#### Authority

*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals Eighth Edition*  
Personnel Management, pg. 15-23  
Facilities for Sanitizing Materials, pg. 143

AAALAC Position Statement

[Safety Requirements for Walk-In Cage/Rack Washers and Bulk Sterilizers](#)

**References**

DCM-W Standard Operating Procedure Manual

“Cage Wash and Autoclave Safety”

“Autoclave Operation”

“Cage Washer Operation & Maintenance”

“Employee Orientation & Review”

“Continuing Education”

EQ-005-04 Operation and Maintenance of Metalwash Tunnel Washer

EQ-008-05 Operation and Maintenance of the Lynx450 and 420 Cage Washers

DCM-C Standard Operating Procedure Manual

“Cage Wash and Autoclave Safety”