

Working with radioactive materials

Technicians may not have specific responsibility for radioactive materials in school, but an awareness is important.

The Health and Safety Executive's Field Operations Division has contacted SSERC (and CLEAPSS for the rest of the UK) to explain it is undertaking a programme of inspections across England, Wales and Scotland to see how schools manage the safe use and storage of the radioactive sources used in science teaching. An inspection programme may come as a surprise to some when you consider the relatively low risk of these sources compared to those used in universities and hospitals. But low risk does not mean exemption from inspection.

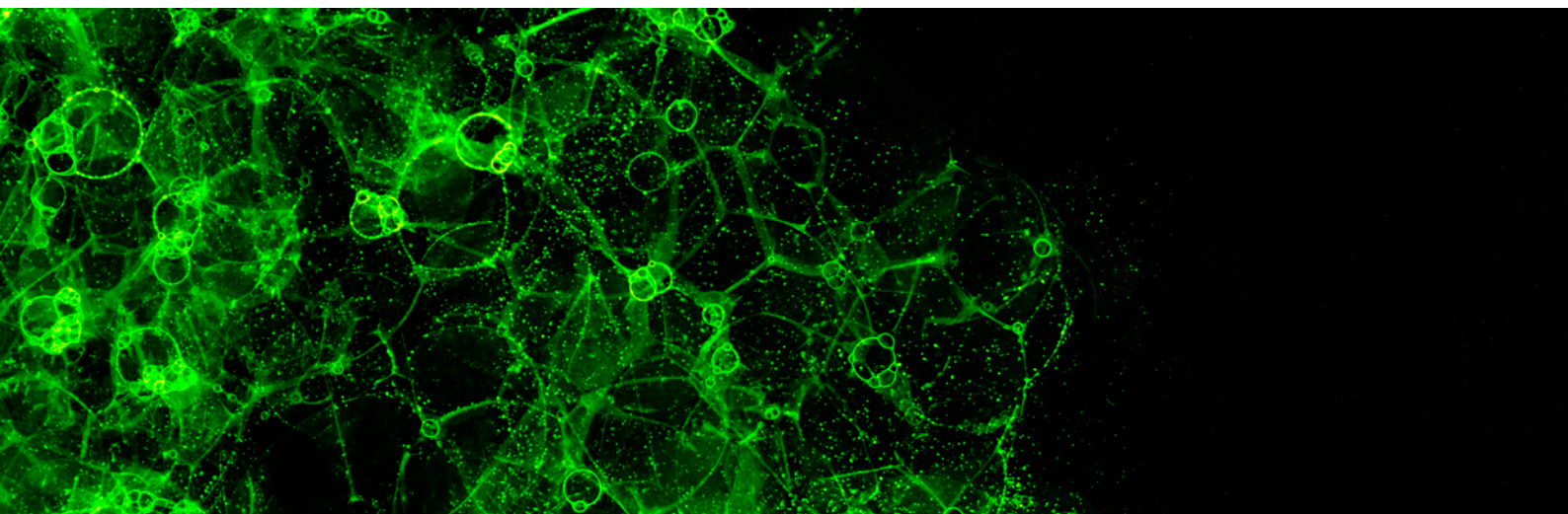
Ahead of the inspection programme, our advice for Scottish schools with radioactive materials is to log in to our website and read the document *Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools*, which is downloadable from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1].

We are not the radiation protection police at SSERC, nor do we carry out inspections. If we did do so, we'd expect to be introduced to a member of staff who had taken responsibility for ensuring that the science department's procedures for working with radioactive materials were both safe and compliant with the law. Have a look at the following checklist. Can your school tick all the boxes? If you can't at the moment, make sure that you address the weak areas. You are not on your own – the team at SSERC will work with you. Contact us on rpa@sserc.scot.



We also run courses on working with radioactive materials. We'd love to see you at our face-to-face course that will next run in August, but we appreciate that not everyone who wants to will be able to come. We will also run an online course in March 2023 and are soon to launch a self-study course. Details of all courses can be found on our website [2]. Keep checking for new courses!

At the time of writing, we don't know how many schools in Scotland HSE intends to inspect or when they will be inspecting them. We are however confident that all schools who keep and use radioactive materials should be able to work with SSERC to be in a position where they have nothing to fear from an HSE inspection.



This is a checklist.

Item	Comments	Tick
SSERC poster with basic safety rules displayed, customised to have your own 'radiation casualty' hospital listed, and supervisory teacher identified	Editable version downloadable from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1]	
Stocklist present	Editable version downloadable from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1]	
Log of usage maintained	Editable version downloadable from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1]	
Monthly stock checks take place (except for summer holidays) and are recorded in log		
Only approved sources used	See document Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools for a photo guide	
Contingency plans available	Customisable plans available in document Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools	
Plans covering less serious incidents available	Customisable plans available in document Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools	
Activities risk-assessed, control measures communicated to users	Generic risk assessments available for adaptation from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1]	
All staff who work with radioactive materials given appropriate training	We run training courses, details on our website [2] or inhouse training can be provided by a competent person e.g. the supervisory teacher	
No work with radioactive materials by learners if under 16s in the class		
Training and supervision of older students if they are to use radioactive materials		
Appropriate secure storage	See document Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools	
Leak testing carried out and recorded	See document Working With Radioactive Materials in Schools and spreadsheet downloadable from our Ionising Radiation webpage [1]	

[1] <https://www.sserc.org.uk/health-safety/physics-health-safety/ionising-radiation/>

[2] <https://www.sserc.org.uk/professional-learning/secondary-clpl/health-safety-clpl/>