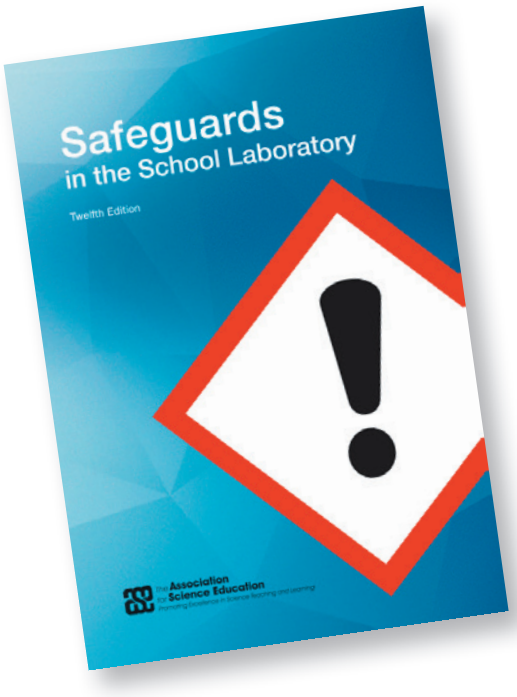
A new edition of Safeguards in the School Laboratory

At its Annual Conference in Reading, ASE launched the 12th edition of *Safeguards in the School Laboratory*. This familiar title was written by members of the ASE's Health & Safety Group and is intended for all those involved in 11-19 science education. It will be particularly useful for newly-qualified and trainee teachers, new technicians and for those seeking promotion to, or newly-appointed as, heads of department, senior technicians, etc. Having said that, one experienced former head of department, who joined the Group shortly before the revision started, was astonished at how much he hadn't known!



Safeguards in the School Laboratory seeks to provide an overview of health & safety issues in science education; it flags up areas where there are significant misconceptions, where problems commonly arise and draws attention to situations which, although rare, may have serious consequences.

Although the underlying advice in the 11th edition (2006) is still sound, it has been updated where legislation has altered, e.g. on chemical hazards and radioactivity, or where school practice has changed. Most sections have been reworded to improve clarity; the chapters and sections dealing with chemicals have been completely reorganised and rewritten.

Strictly speaking, this is really the 13th edition. *Safeguards in the Laboratory* was first published by the Association of Women Science Teachers in 1933 '*… to help inexperienced teachers to avoid some of the commoner laboratory mishaps and to guide non-scientific headmistresses in laboratory administration from the point of view of safety.*' In 1947, the Science Masters' Association and the Association of Women Science Teachers published what was described as the 1st edition of Safeguards in the Laboratory, followed by the 2nd edition in 1950 and the 3rd in 1957. The 4th edition (by now, *Safeguards in the School Laboratory*) came in 1961. By the 5th edition in 1965, the ASE was the publisher and rest is history - 6th edition in 1972, 7th 1976, 8th 1981, 9th 1988, 10th 1996 and 11th 2006.

It does not replace detailed health & safety advice or risk assessments provided by SSERC on behalf of employers (or CLEAPSS in the rest of the UK); it does, however, alert readers to those occasions when they need to be careful and check those details. Ideally it should be read from cover to cover, even if some parts are skipped over at a first reading. Physicists do use some chemicals, biologists do use electrical equipment and technicians need to understand the issues facing teachers - and vice versa. This approach is perhaps most valuable for heads of faculty to make them aware of potential problems outwith their own subject specialism.

This, coupled with Topics in Safety, the latest chapters of which are available on the ASE website, provides an invaluable resource for managing health and safety in school science departments. <<

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