

Environmental Health and Instructional Safety **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

TRITIUM EXIT SIGNS

Tritium EXIT signs are self-illuminating signs containing radioactive tritium gas. These signs produce green light continuously for several years without any external power source and are typically used in areas where providing electrical power is difficult. The signs are labeled with a "CAUTION RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL" warning on the back or side. If damaged or broken, a tritium EXIT sign can present a radiation exposure hazard.

Problems with the Use of Tritium EXIT Signs.

The main problem with tritium signs is the hazardous radioactive material they contain. Despite the requirements to properly dispose of these signs, many of them are simply thrown away. State governments have been unable to monitor the use and disposal of tritium signs, and literally thousands of them go missing every year, winding up in our landfills, abandoned buildings, demolition sites, and scrap yards. Tritium has shown up in water supplies nationwide and is becoming a serious environmental and health problem. In fact, some states have even considered a ban on tritium EXIT signs, as a result of several incidents where the glass tubes were damaged and people were exposed to radiation. The US Army alone has spent millions of dollars cleaning up tritium contamination. A tritium EXIT sign can be a potentially serious liability for the building owner.

University Ban on Tritium EXIT Signs

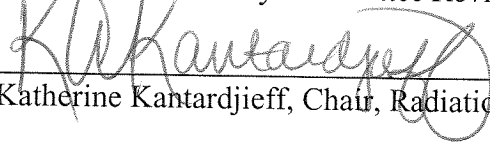
Due to the problems experienced with tritium signs and the testing and inventory required by the University's broad scope license, the Radiation Safety Committee, in 1989, banned the temporary and permanent use of Tritium EXIT signs on the Californian State University campus. The Committee has no jurisdiction or preference for non-radioactive EXIT signage and leaves that decision to Facilities Management.

Design and Construction is responsible for ensuring these sign are excluded from building plans and specifications.

Questions concerning this policy can be directed to the campus Radiation Safety Committee or the Radiation Safety Officer (Ext. 2507).

Date: 12/19/89 Radiation Safety Committee Reviewed/Updated: 3/6/06

Signed


Katherine Kantardjieff, Chair, Radiation Safety Committee