



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences

WELL BUILDING HEALTH & SAFETY RATING

FEATURE GUIDE



NIEHS WELL Health & Safety Feature Guide

Introduction

In November 2020, NIEHS began pursuing the International Well Building Health and Safety Rating for all occupied buildings on campus. The WELL Health-Safety Rating for Facility Operations and Management is an evidenced-based third-party verified rating for all new and existing facility types, focusing on:

- Operational Policies
- Maintenance Protocols
- Stake Holder Engagement
- Emergency Plans

The rating, was informed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but has a broader applicability for supporting the long-term health and safety needs of the people in a given space¹

The WELL Health-Safety Rating includes more than 20 features across the following core areas, a minimum of 15 of which need to be met:

- Cleaning and Sanitization Procedures
- Emergency Preparedness Programs
- Health Service Resources
- Air and Water Quality Management
- Stakeholder Engagement and Communication ¹

NIEHS pursued 19 of the more than 20 criteria, and achieved all 19. This feature guide will provide you with a synopsis of what was achieved.

NIEHS WELL Health & Safety Feature Guide Summary

Feature		Status
Cleaning and Sanitization Procedures	Support Handwashing	Achieved
	Reduce Surface Contact	Achieved
	Improve Cleaning Practices	Achieved
	Select Preferred Cleaning Products	Achieved
Emergency Preparedness Programs	Develop Emergency Preparedness Plan	Achieved
	Plan for Healthy Re-Entry	Achieved
	Provide Emergency Resources	Achieved
Health Service Resources	Provide Sick Leave	Achieved
	Provide Health Benefits	Achieved
	Support Mental Health Recovery	Achieved
	Promote Flu Vaccines	Achieved
	Promote Smoke Free Environment	Achieved
Air & Water Quality Management	Assess Ventilation	Achieved
	Assess & Maintain Air Treatment Systems	Achieved
	Develop Legionella Management Plan	Achieved
	Monitor Air & Water Quality	Achieved
	Manage Mold & Moisture	Achieved
Stakeholder Engagement & Communication	Promote Health and Wellness	Achieved
	Share Food Inspection Information	Achieved

NIEHS WELL Health & Safety Feature Guide

Feature Achievement

Cleaning and Sanitization Procedures

COVID-19 and other infection diseases are spread through close contact with an infected person via respiratory droplet. However, viruses and other pathogens can survive on surfaces infected by droplets as well. Maintaining good cleaning protocols and reducing surface contact can help NIEHS maintain organizational resilience by helping to reduce the risk of infection.¹

While sanitizing surfaces is critical to interrupting the spread of infectious diseases, cleaning products may contain ingredients which can be hazardous to human health and the environment. Given the mission of the NIEHS is “to discover how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives” it is imperative to ensure use low hazard cleaning products

Support Handwashing

ACHIEVED

NIEHS improved hygiene on campus by installing fragrance-free soap in hands free soap dispensers with sealed disposable soap cartridges to prevent bacterial growth at each handwashing station. The soap dispensers are inspected daily and refilled as needed. Additionally touchless paper towel dispensers were installed for hand drying. Signage designed by the World Health Organization detailing handwashing best practices were installed as well.



Reduce Surface Contact

ACHIEVED

NIEHS reduced surface contact through managing what surfaces required touching. Touchless faucets, soap and paper towel dispensers were installed in every bathroom on campus. Regularly used pedestrian entry doors had hands free operation installed by use of electric motion sensors. All trash, recycling and reuse bins were replaced with hands free operation. Near high touch surfaces that could not be removed such as hand railings, doors and elevators, hand sanitizing stations



are located to ensure building occupants maintain proper hand hygiene.

Cleaning and Sanitization Procedures

Improved Cleaning Practices

ACHIEVED

NIEHS already had a rigorous cleaning protocol; however, in light of the current climate, the protocol was improved. The goal of the NIEHS cleaning plan is to provide cleaning and disinfection requirement while reducing the exposure of the occupants and maintenance personnel to pathogens, allergens, and harmful cleaning chemicals which adversely impact air quality, health, finishes, building systems and the environment. High touch surfaces are cleaned three times a day: morning, after lunch and evening by a night crew².

Select Preferred Cleaning Products

ACHIEVED

Given the nature of the mission and research of the NIEHS, the use of chemicals in cleaning products is strictly reviewed. All cleaning, disinfecting and sanitization products used on the NIHES have been reviewed and do not contain ingredients in section 3 of the SDS which are classified as Category 1, 1A or 1B Health Hazards³

Emergency Preparedness Programs

Emergency preparedness and resilience plans are critical to ensuring that organizations are equipped to immediately confront a crisis, as well as to recover successfully from it.¹ All federal agencies have the responsibility for the safety of their employees and the legal obligation to continue operations under adverse conditions. Emergency preparedness programs can ensure an organization is prepared to support and handle unforeseen emergency situations, reduce occupant confusion and bolster employee coordination.

Develop Emergency Preparedness Plan

ACHIEVED

NIEHS takes several steps to prepare for emergencies. NIEHS performs various risk assessments to identify key assets, potential impacts of relevant hazards and determine emergency management planning priorities. NIEHS maintains a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) which outlines the NIEHS response to all hazards identified in the Risk Management report. It includes an inventory of resources as well as a list of specialized personnel and their roles

Plan for Healthy Re-Entry

ACHIEVED

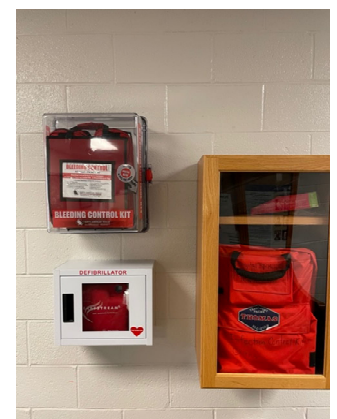
Both NIH and NIEHS developed a comprehensive re-entry framework to return employees to campus following an emergency situation, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. This included criteria that must be met, as well as dividing the staff into 5 groups based on roles on campus. In addition this criteria was monitored and the institute prepared to send onsite staff home should the criteria indicate or significant community spread began to occur on campus. NIEHS continued to extend telework flexibilities to all employees.

The NIEHS campus was never fully evacuated due to the 24/7 requirements; therefore, additional inspections and building start ups were unnecessary. Buildings continued to be operated and maintained as required by the Facilities Management Branch who were on site the entire time.

Provide Emergency Resources

ACHIEVED

NIEHS ensures occupant safety and security is a top priority, and keeps emergency resources available at all times. These resources include an outdoor mass notification system, as well as an indoor fire alarm system with voice commands, which has recordings to mimic the outdoor system, undesignated epinephrine injectors available at the Campus Occupational Health Unit and Automatic External Defibrillators (AED)s located at every elevator lobby in 101, and every other building on campus. NIEHS also has on onsite Occupational Medicine Unit and Medical Response Team composed of onsite doctors and nurses. The NIEHS security contractor conducts drills with Durham County EMS and Fire Department to ensure quick response.



Health Service Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how the behaviors of one person can negatively impact others in severe ways.¹ By providing individual health resources to employees, such as health benefits, sick leave and mental health services can help improve the health, wellbeing of employees and their families resulting increased morale and a more productive workforce.

As a leader in the field of environmental effects on people's health, the NIEHS prioritizes the health and well being of its employees through programs such as free annual flu vaccination clinics, and ensuring the campus is 100% smoke free

Provide Sick Leave

ACHIEVED

All Federal Government employees are provided with 104 hours of sick leave annually, separate from Annual leave. This leave is accruable throughout an employees career. Additionally the NIH provides access to the NIH Leave Bank for longer periods of illness.

Employees are encouraged not to report to campus if they are feeling ill, and to utilize their sick leave to recuperate.

Provide Health Benefits

ACHIEVED

All Federal Government employees and retirees are provided the opportunity to participate in the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program, which contains the widest selection of health plans in the country. Including preventative services, immunizations, screenings for things such as cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure, as well as tobacco cessation services and medications.⁴ NIH also provides an Ombudsman Office that provides free confidential counselling for a qualified professional.

Support Mental Health Recovery

ACHIEVED

NIEHS, through NIH provides employees with a full-service Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is staffed by professionals with licensure and certification in workplace wellness and behavioral health. EAP is free to all employees and immediate family members. EAP crisis counselling, bereavement counselling, along with other services to enhance personal and professional wellbeing.



Health Service Resources

Promote Flu Vaccine

ACHIEVED

To reduce the incidence of season influenza (flu), NIEHS provides an annual free on-site flu vaccination clinic along with education on good health habits. All federal employees, contractors and trainees are eligible to receive a flu vaccine through the on-site Occupational Health Unit. These vaccines are offered at no cost to employees and are administered on-site during business hours. Employees are notified about the vaccination clinic yearly through All-Hands email communications.

Promote Smoke Free Workplace

ACHIEVED

Secondhand and thirdhand smoke is detrimental to employee health and wellness. As such. In 2011 the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a policy prohibiting tobacco use on all HHS occupied facilities, both inside and outside. While on the NIEHS campus the use of cigarette, cigars, pipes, smokeless tobacco, or other tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are prohibited at all times. This includes NIEHS owned and leased property, as well as parking areas and private vehicles while on NIEHS property.



Air & Water Quality Management

People spend a majority of their time in enclosed spaces, and poorly ventilated spaces are linked to several health and wellness ailments and increased absences in employees. Research has shown that increased ventilation in a building can reduce the change of influenza. In a 2019 study, it showed that providing even minimum levels of outdoor air ventilation reduced influenza transmission as much as 50%-60% of the people in the building being vaccinated.¹

Treatment of indoor air through air filtration with HEPA or near-HEPA filters and Ultra-violet Germicidal irradiation (UVGI) helps remove and irradiate virus particulates as well as other compounds.

Basic management for water quality ensure that water quality is maintained

Assess Ventilation

ACHIEVED

NIH Office of Research Facilities (ORF) assessed all HVAC units in occupied buildings for their current Outdoor Air Supply. All of Bldg. 101 Modules C, D, E and F are already 100% single pass Outside Air. All other air systems on campus were evaluated for increases in Outside Air supply, and were modified to a minimum of 30% outside air, if the mechanical systems and thermal comfort of the occupants allowed. Keystone was increased to 40% outside air as well.

Assess & Maintain Air Treatment Systems

ACHIEVED

NIH Office of Research Facilities (ORF) maintains all air treatment systems and devices on campus. Approximately 96% of all campus buildings have fresh air filtered through a MERV 13 filter and 80% have UVGI systems. Preventative maintenance tasks for filter replacements are based on pressure drop across the filter ensuring heavily loaded filters are changed to maximize filtration.

Develop Legionella Management Plan

ACHIEVED

NIH Office of Research Facilities (ORF) maintains a Legionella Management Plan for water systems on campus that maintain a temperature under 120-140 degrees F. A risk assessment performed indicates that there is very little risk of legionella contamination on campus. Slim risks exist from stagnation of water in showerheads and hand washing facilities after weekend recesses and cooling tower drift to nearby campus buildings. To mitigate these risks ORF performs monitoring actions on these systems.

Air & Water Quality Management

Monitor Air & Water Quality

ACHIEVED

NIEHS performs air monitoring based on risk and complaints. Risk monitoring occurs when activities are performed which have the potential to adversely effect air quality, such as construction work. Complain monitoring is performed as a result of an individual complaint or suspected occupational injury or illness

NIEHS receives all its drinking water from Durham County. NIEHS performs sampling of the drinking water for a variety of constituents as needed to support facility improvement or to response to a complaint

Manage Mold & Moisture

ACHIEVED

NIH Office of Research Facilities (ORF) inspects the building and premises twice daily as part of the 24-hour Building Operators shift round inspections. The building and its premises are inspected for mold and moisture including water damage, pooling, discoloration, mold on ceilings, walls, floors and HVAC equipment. Mechanical spaces have piping inspected for leaks as well. The high quantities of outside air along with the high efficiency filtration and UVGI work to manage mold, mildew and moisture.

These inspections are documented in the maintenance management software. If any of the monitoring points for these inspections are marked yes, it will trigger a work order and mold testing, remediation will take place.

Additionally building occupants can report mold or moisture using the work order system accessible through the NIEHS Junction Intranet Page

Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

During emergencies, stakeholder engagement and communication is critical to instilling confidence, improving coordination and supporting actions that can help protect safety. Regular, clear communication about the emergency preparedness and response strategies being utilized by an owner or operator of a space to support people's health and safety, as well as how stakeholders can build awareness of what to do during an emergency event, provides critical information that supports the health and well-being of all occupants.¹

Promote Health & Wellness

ACHIEVED

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Nations leading Biomedical and Health Research Organization, maintains a Health Orientated Mission for the Nation and its employees.

The mission of the NIH is: *To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.*

The NIH, NIEHS and Federal Government believe in investing in employees through health benefits, employee recreation and mental/physical health support programs.

This feature guide, along with information on the NIEHS Junction Intranet highlight those programs and features which promote employee health and wellness.

Communication with employees is foundational to the NIEHS Health and Wellness Mission. Quarterly Directors All-Hands are held to provide information to employees as well as open the floor for questions and answers. A Directors Suggestion Box is available for use on the NIEHS Junction Intranet page. During the COVID-19 pandemic, employees received weekly updates from both the NIH and NIEHS director. The NIEHS director holds monthly COVID related All-Hands in addition to the normally scheduled quarterly meetings.

ACHIEVED

Share Food Inspection Information

The NIEHS cafeteria meets all Durham County Health Code standards and is inspected by the Durham County Health Department. Those grades are publicly displayed



References

1. WELL Building Health and Safety Rating Criteria Overview: <https://v2.wellcertified.com/health-safety/en/overview>
2. NIEHS RTP Campus Improved Cleaning Practices Plan
3. NIEHS RTP Campus Preferred Cleaning Products
4. OPM Website: www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare