

# WORKING SAFELY WITH AUTOCLAVES

## AUTOCLAVE HAZARDS

- Burns from hot metal, hot liquid, or steam.
- Pressure release (leak around door, steam on before door is closed, malfunctioning autoclave)
- Lacerations from broken glass
- Biohazard exposure from waste bags.

## EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE PPE FOR USE WITH AUTOCLAVES

- Face shield, lab coat, gloves



- Thermal gloves for handling dry surfaces



## BIOLOGICAL SAFETY OFFICE

2424 Erwin Road  
Suite 503, Hock Plaza 1  
Durham, NC 27705  
Phone: 919-684-8822  
Fax: 919-681-7509

## SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Train all users according to the manufacturers instructions.
- Conduct routine **inspection** and **maintenance**. In University buildings, contact Facilities Maintenance (684-2121), In medical center buildings, contact Engineering and Operations (684-3232).
- Use **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** appropriate for the hazard.
  - Long sleeved lab coat, long pants and closed-toe shoes.
  - Safety glasses, goggles or face shield.
  - Gloves: Thermal, liquid proof thermal, or exam.
- Use **autoclavable containers** for your material, such as Pyrex glass and orange biohazard waste bags. Unapproved materials can break or melt.
- Keep **loads small** and **vented** (to avoid overpressurization), and place into **autoclavable trays** to contain spills or broken glass.
- Open the door only when the cycle is complete and allow liquids to **cool for 10 minutes** before removing items.
- Keep the counter and floor around the autoclave **free of clutter** and promptly mop up water or other liquids to prevent slips.
- **Never** autoclave chemicals or radioactives.
- If using **stacked autoclaves**, use only the lower autoclave for liquids.