U-M’s commitment to safety relies on the support of its employees, and Occupational Safety & Environmental Health (OSEH) recognizes employees who excel in creating and maintaining a safe workplace with the annual Safety First Recognition Award.

OSEH is pleased to announce that the Chemistry Building Safety Team has won the Safety First Recognition Award for 2015!

The Chemistry Building Safety Team members are trained annually in several key areas, including building specific safety training and waste handling. In addition to taking an active role in safety training, the Safety Team also holds monthly meetings to discuss all safety matters, accident occurrences, and ways to minimize or eliminate any future similar incidents. The result has been the creation and modification of Standard Operating Procedures, some of which have been adopted by other units and are made available to new faculty as they establish their research programs.

The Safety Team has instituted monthly self-inspections and annual safety inspections led by another research group’s Safety representative. These inspections are in addition to those carried out by OSEH and help to identify safety issues that might be overlooked or missed during a self-inspection. The Safety Team has helped to eliminate many high risk or environmentally dangerous experiments in teaching labs, and has recommended safer green alternative experiments. These changes have resulted in a decrease in safety incidences and the increased use of environmentally friendly materials.

Some of their recent efforts include purchasing new flame resistant lab coats to replace all existing white lab coats for over 400 researchers and graduate students in the Department of Chemistry. As a result of their work, the number of thermal burns has decreased from an average of 5-7 burns per term in 2006, down to zero per term in 2014. Rates of chemical exposures have also been reduced from an average of 10-15 per term to almost zero.

OSEH congratulates them for their outstanding efforts to emphasize the importance of health & safety.

Chemistry Building Safety Team award recipients with Terrance Alexander, Executive Director OSEH and Office of Campus Sustainability