

Back-up Freezer Use Protocol

Background: Many labs in the Larner College of Medicine (LCOM) use -80°C freezers to store critical research materials. Freezer failure can result in the loss of irreplaceable samples and costly reagents. To mitigate risk and provide a quick response solution, please follow the guidelines below.

Best Practices to Prevent Freezer Failure

- Regular Maintenance: Defrost as needed and change filters regularly. See [Risk Management & Safety Guidelines](#).
- Organize Contents: Use racks or boxes for efficient access and quick transfer.
- Alarm Systems: Use a monitoring system (e.g., Sensaphone) with alerts to your phone/email to detect failures after hours.
- Contingency Planning: Know where backup freezer space exists — either in your lab or others — before an emergency happens.

Emergency Back-Up Freezers

LCOM has three -80°C freezers available for short-term emergency use (generally, up to 7 days) while repairs or replacements are arranged. To help manage these scarce back-up freezer resources, please keep the LCOM Facilities informed on the status of the inoperable freezer until your samples have been permanently removed.

Freezer Locations

- Given Building: Freezer is located in the Loading Dock area and always powered on.
- Jeffords Building: Two freezers in Room 013 (basement).
 - One on the north wall and one on the east wall, both labeled as "Back-Up Freezer."

Access to Jeffords Freezers:

- Business Hours: Through the COM Dean's Office
- After Hours: Contact Physical Plant or Police Services

Freezers must remain in place. You are responsible for transporting samples safely.

Use Procedure

1. Freezer Access & Security

- a. Freezers are usually unlocked.
- b. A key is available to lock the freezer once your materials are placed inside.
- c. *Required:* Lock the freezer when storing BSL-2 materials, especially in the Given freezer.

2. Labeling

- a. Clearly label all samples per [Safety Labeling Guidelines](#).
- b. Attach a label to the outside of the freezer with:
 - i. Department name
 - ii. Contact information
 - iii. Date of use
 - iv. For BSL-2 materials: add a biohazard sign

3. Notify LCOM Staff

- a. Once you begin using the freezer please email Sue Williams at susan.l.williams@med.uvm.edu) and Elayna Mellas-Hulett at elayna.mellas@uvm.edu

4. After Use

- Remove all contents within 7 days.
- Clean and decontaminate any spills (shut down freezer if necessary for thorough cleaning).
- Return the key to the freezer lock.
- Notify Sue and Elayna when the freezer is available again.

Best Practices & Reminders

- Keep extra space in your own freezer(s) for emergencies.
- Coordinate with colleagues on available backup space when needed.
- For questions or assistance, email:
 - Sue Williams: susan.l.williams@med.uvm.edu
 - Elayna Mellas-Hulett: elayna.mellas@uvm.edu