What should I do if...

...there is an emergency?
If there is a personal injury or other major emergency (such as a fire), follow the normal emergency procedure and disregard any concern about radiation exposure. The potential for receiving any measurable radiation dose is minimal. After the emergency is over, evacuate the area and contact EH&S for assistance.

...there is a spill?
If the spill is in a radiation laboratory or involves radioactive material, do not attempt to clean up the spill yourself. Secure the area and call EH&S or the contact listed on the door tag for assistance.

...I have to repair equipment?
You should never attempt to repair equipment with a radiation symbol unless it has been surveyed by EH&S and declared free of radioactive contamination.

...I have to repair facilities?
All structures potentially contaminated with radioactive material are labeled with the radiation symbol. Notify EH&S before repairing drains, air ducts or other structures labeled with the radiation symbol.
Radiation has always been present on earth and is part of our natural surroundings. Background radiation is the term used for radiation that is found in nature. Some natural sources of background radiation include the air we breathe, the food we eat, the wood and concrete in building materials, and the rocks and soil.

Besides being a valuable research tool, radiation is also used by medical doctors to diagnose and treat many illnesses. Radiation is also found in common household products, such as smoke detectors.

**What is a Radiation Dose?**

A radiation dose is the amount of energy from ionizing radiation that is absorbed by your body. State and federal regulations limit the radiation dose for a member of the general public or a non-radiation worker to 100 mrem per year (from university operations).

In comparison, the average background radiation dose for a person living in Iowa is 360 mrem per year – a typical chest x-ray delivers a radiation dose of 10 mrem.

**Radiation Laboratories**

There are many laboratories at Iowa State using radiation in research. They are identified by the radiation symbol on the door. Before performing any task in these laboratories, ancillary personnel should contact the lab supervisor or principal investigator to see what precautions may need to be taken.

**Rules to Follow**

There are minimal risks associated with using ionizing radiation. These risks are no greater than other common activities (such as using power tools, climbing a ladder, or using electricity). By following these few basic rules, you can ensure your safety while working in areas posted with the radiation symbol.

- Follow all room postings carefully.
- Announce yourself and state your purpose when entering a lab.
- If no one is present in the lab, contact the principal investigator or lab supervisor by calling the numbers listed on the door.
- Ask the laboratory personnel to identify areas that should be avoided.
- Do not handle anything labeled with the radiation symbol (unless directed by the lab supervisor, principal investigator or EH&S).
- Call EH&S at (515) 294-5359 if you have any questions or concerns.