Safety Advisory

Event:

A hot plate in a University of Regina laboratory was left unattended, starting a fire and causing damage. It is believed that the heat from the hot plate melted paraffin wax, ignited a towel, and scorched surrounding infrastructure and equipment (see pictures below). The fire, although contained, had potential to cause serious damage and personal injury.

Corrective recommendations:

1. Communicate to all lab personnel the critical importance of not leaving high temperature heating equipment unattended, if practical to do so. If heating equipment must be left on, ensure sufficient safety precautions are in place (i.e. heating to be done in a fume hood, elimination of all combustible materials from the immediate vicinity (above, below, and on all sides) of the heat source, double boiler heating technique, etc.)

2. Equip older equipment, without auto shut-off capabilities, with timers or temperature controllers, if possible. This would ensure the automatic shut down of electrical equipment on evenings and weekends.

3. Institute safe work protocols to unplug heating equipment when not in use and if practical to do so.
4. Purchase heating equipment in which the controls are clearly marked, to ensure the user can easily determine if the device is on or off and the temperature setting.
5. Temperature regulation or auto shut-off capabilities should be considered when purchasing new laboratory heating equipment.
6. Encourage all personnel to do a final safety walk around before leaving the laboratory each day.

Please remember to communicate this information to all personnel using high temperature electrical equipment and appliances.