Student lab safety standards needed

To Irving Dayton's letter on student lab safety (PHYSICS TODAY, August 2011, page 9), I add the following note.

In April, the day after a Yale University accident in which a student was killed, I wrote to my state senator. I asked that she propose legislation that would require schools to provide safer lab environments, much like the safety requirements that OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) places on commercial manufacturers and laboratories. I have not received a response yet, but I'm hoping my suggestion will be considered.

Furthermore, after several school lab accidents in Connecticut over the past year, I've noticed a trend: All occurred when a student was working alone late at night.

I encourage readers to write to their state legislators urging that student lab safety requirements be established and enforced. Professor-to-student discussions about laboratory safety need to be frequent and routine, and standards need to be put in place to ensure that students are not working in the lab alone.

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Correction

September 2011, page 32—The American Institute of Physics and all 10 of its member societies (listed on page 6), not just the two that were named, contributed to the expenses of the US team for this year's International Physics Olympiad. ■