Biohazard group under study

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agents in use on campus, and under what conditions they are being stored, and what research they are being used for.

- Collecting up-to-date information on biohazardous agents and keeping researchers informed of the latest methods for their proper use and control.
- Keeping track of research projects on campus which involve biohazardous agents and reviewing the methods and facilities proposed for proper use and control of the agents.
- Giving advice on and objective assessment of practices and methods to reduce the risks inherent in use of biohazardous agents.
- The committee would require at least one professional staff member, Fox said, to maintain its information and monitor research to see if standards are being met. This staff support would be particularly important if federal standards for biohazard control are set, Fox said.

The committee would probably not wish to engage itself in political problems like the DNA controversy, Fox said, adding that he was reluctant "to get dragged into questions like that. I really don't know how to answer them."

While national concern over biohazards has risen, concern over lab safety at MIT has skyrocketed. A "mini-revolt" of lab technicians and assistants last spring was followed by formation of a Workers' Health and Safety Committee in the Cancer Center and Biology Department - a development many people feel was instrumental in bringing on the formation of the biohazards group.

"The workers' committee draws its authority from the people who are taking the risks - the technicians and assistants who handle these agents," Associate Professor Jonathan King, safety officer for Biology and unofficial head of the workers' group, said. "We're working on raising workers' consciousness about the hazards they face and in forcing the departments to take more care with their workers' health."

"If the official committee does a good job," King said, "there will be no problem. If they don't, then there will be another group watching over them, keeping an eye out for the workers."

Fox said that he did not feel that the formation of the workers' committee was "a provocative element" in formation of the Committee on Biohazards. "That group is a very good thing, but it's not the same thing as the faculty group," he said. "The relations between the two committees are going to have to work themselves out over time."

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