



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

FOR US POSTAL SERVICE DELIVERY:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500, MSC 6910  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-6910  
Home Page: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>

FOR EXPRESS MAIL:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817  
Telephone: (301) 496-7163  
Facsimile: (301) 480-3387

April 7, 2021

Re: Animal Welfare Assurance  
A3893-01 [OLAW Case Z]

Dr. Mark Barteau  
Vice President for Research  
Texas A&M University College of Dentistry  
(b) (4) J.K. Williams Building 1112 TAMU  
College State, TX 77843-1112

Dear Dr. Barteau,

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) acknowledges receipt of your April 2, 2021 letter reporting a natural disaster which negatively impacted research animals at Texas A&M University, following up on an initial telephone report on March 2, 2021. According to the information provided, OLAW understands that the state and institution experienced a severe winter storm with snow and freezing temperature which resulted in a pipe bursting and leaking water into the animal room and flooding some mouse cages. A total of 84 mice died or were euthanized due to the flooding and 11 mice died later. Also, several heating coils failed which prevented the building from maintaining heat. The building involved had not been designed to withstand these low temperatures and the other animal buildings did not experience negative impacts from the storm.

The immediate actions taken in response consisted of removing all animals from the impacted building and taking them to another campus vivarium. Veterinary care was provided including provision of supplemental heat, warmed fluids, and food supplements. Moribund animals were euthanized. The impacted building is currently not used for animal housing and prior to using it again, facility upgrades will be undertaken to prepare it for any future weather events of this kind. The NIH funding components were notified about the incident.

Based on its assessment of this explanation, OLAW understands that a natural disaster impacted research rodents and that animal program staff responded promptly to relocate, treat, and euthanize impacted animals. OLAW concurs with the actions taken by the institution to restore compliance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals during the disaster and commends the veterinary and animal care staff for their swift response actions. Thank you for keeping OLAW apprised on this matter.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Axel Wolff, M.S., D.V.M.  
Deputy Director  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare

cc: IACUC Chair

**DIVISION OF RESEARCH**

Office of the Vice President for Research



April 2, 2021

Axel Wolff, DVM  
Director, Division of Compliance Oversight  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
National Institutes of Health  
Rockledge 1, Suite 360  
Bethesda, MD 20892

RE: Texas A&M University Assurance D16-00511 (A3893-01) Final Report of Incident

Dear Dr. Wolff,

In accordance with Assurance D16-00511 (A3893-01) and PHS Policy IV.F.3., Texas A&M University provides this final report of an incident first reported to you on March 3, 2021 via a telephone call by Andrea Mitchell, B.S., Director of the Animal Welfare Office. The incident involved the death of mice resulting from a natural disaster occurring in February 2021. The impacted animals were in part supported by NIH Grants 1R01AG064869-01, 1R01DK118334-01A1, and 1R56AG063746-01. The NIH funding components are in the process of being notified of the incident as applicable.

On February 12, 2021, the Governor of the State of Texas issued a disaster declaration in response to severe winter weather in Texas certifying that the severe winter weather posed an imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury and loss due to prolonged freezing temperatures, heavy snow and freezing rain statewide. President Biden approved the major disaster declaration on February 20, 2021.

In anticipation of the extreme weather, all animal facilities were identified and prioritized to maintain compliant environmental conditions by the University Facilities management group throughout the cold weather event.

On February 17, 2021 the IACUC was notified by the Attending Veterinarian of a pipe rupture within an external wall on the second floor of Building 1501. The incident occurred the night before after normal business hours. The ruptured pipe caused water to leak into several rooms within the first floor vivarium. In one room of the vivarium, water leaked onto the top row of cages causing some cage flooding. In addition to this water leak, a number of heating coils throughout the entire building failed, which impacted the ability of the building to maintain heat. This resulted in the loss of heat to the vivarium in addition to the flooding of the top row of an animal housing cage unit.

All animals in the entire vivarium were removed from the building and transported to another vivarium on February 17, 2021. The animals were assessed with veterinary treatment including supplemental heat, warmed fluids and critical care food supplement was provided. Moribund animals were identified and humanely euthanized under the direction of the Attending Veterinarian who was on site. Approximately 84 mice were found dead or subsequently euthanized due to the flooded cages on this one rack unit. An additional 11 mice were found dead over the following week.

1112 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1112  
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Texas A&M University Assurance D16-00511 (A3893-01) Final Report of Incident

April 2, 2021

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The IACUC conducted an initial review of the incident on February 25, 2021 and then again on March 18, 2021, when additional details were available. While the IACUC acknowledged a deviation from the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* due to a major building system failure, the Committee concluded that the incident was the result of *force majeure*. The damage to the pipe(s) and heating coils within the building were the direct result of the unprecedented, unanticipated extended duration of low temperatures that the infrastructure of the building was not designed to withstand.

Fortunately, Building 1501 was the only facility housing University laboratory animals that was negatively impacted in this manner.

There is no immediate plan to reoccupy this vivarium. The Attending Veterinarian is currently reviewing the current state of this animal facility and will team with facility staff/architects to implement corrective actions including facility upgrades aimed to mitigate future unanticipated events of this nature.

Texas A&M University is committed to protecting the welfare of animals used in research and appreciates the guidance and assistance provided by OLAW in this regard. Should you have any questions regarding this case, please contact Andrea Mitchell, B.S., Director of the Animal Welfare Office, at (b) (6) or [animalcompliance@tamu.edu](mailto:animalcompliance@tamu.edu).

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
(b) (6)  
B3B1AFC2A10F4CC...  
Dr. Mark A. Barteau  
Vice President for Research  
Institutional Official

cc: Ms. Andrea Mitchell

## **Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]**

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**From:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 7, 2021 7:43 AM  
**To:** MITCHELL, ANDI  
**Cc:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Subject:** RE: Final Report - Texas A&M University D16-00511

Thank you for this report, Ms. Mitchell. We will send a response shortly.

Axel Wolff

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**From:** MITCHELL, ANDI <mitchella@tamu.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 5, 2021 10:43 AM  
**To:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD) <olawdco@od.nih.gov>  
**Subject:** Final Report - Texas A&M University D16-00511

Dear Dr. Wolff,

Please find attached the final report for the incident first reported by Texas A&M University D16-00511 (A3893-01) on March 3, 2021.

Please let me know if you have questions or if I can assist in any way.

Thank you,

Andi

**Andrea Mitchell, BS, LATG, CPIA**  
Director | Animal Welfare Office  
Division of Research | Texas A&M University  
1186 TAMU | College Station, TX 77843-1186

ph: (b) (6)

Also available on Microsoft Teams

<https://rcb.tamu.edu/>

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY | FEARLESS on Every Front



## Initial Report of Noncompliance

By: (b) (6)

Date: 3/2/21

Time: 2:00

Name of Person reporting: Andi Mitchell

Telephone #: (b) (6)

Fax #:

Email:

Name of Institution: Texas A+M University

Assurance number: A3893

Did incident involve PHS funded activity? ?

Funding component: \_\_\_\_\_

Was funding component contacted (if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

What happened?

1 building impacted, pipes burst, flooded mouse room, 104 mice died.

Species involved: Mice

Personnel involved:

Dates and times:

Animal deaths: 84 + 9 euthanized + 11 died later

Projected plan and schedule for correction/prevention (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Mice moved to different room on campus. Vet will check if any preventive actions can be taken.

Projected submission to OLAW of final report from Institutional Official:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Case # \_\_\_\_\_