New Scientist Hire Sustainability Checklist Template

Modify this checklist with your organization-specific details and incorporate it into your lab’s existing training materials for new hires at your research institution. This is a starting point of ideas to cover, but you can add more points depending on your lab’s existing sustainability best practices. Covering topics like this with new hires as they join the lab will help cement the culture of sustainability within your lab group. It’s best to actually walk through the lab with the new hire when covering these topics, and give them the opportunity to ask questions.

* Go on a lab tour and cover sustainable lab design features that are important for new lab members to know related to lighting, air change rates, temperature settings, windows, etc.
* Review where recycling bins are placed in the lab, what goes into them, and what preparation (if any) is necessary for that lab material to be recycled properly. Pick out examples and explain what the new hire should look for in determining what can go into each recycling bin. Example list, modify for your lab:
  + Expanded polystyrene (remove tape & labels)
  + Cardboard
  + Plastic Film
  + Etc.
* Review specialized equipment function, pointing out key elements for functionality, safety, and sustainability. Examples to cover:
  + Fume Hoods – talk about keeping space clear, not using for storage, keeping sash closed when not working within it
  + Biosafety Cabinets – how to turn biosafety cabinets / tissue culture hoods off (if possible), reminder to close the sash, how your lab sterilizes the cabinet, whether UV is still used or not
  + Autoclaves
  + Dishwashers
  + Purified water systems & what lab protocols require the use of ultrapure water, and which do not
* Review which equipment in the lab gets turned off every night, just on the weekends, what never gets turned off, and what is on outlet timers. Can the outlet timers be overridden if necessary? How? Is there a system in place to indicate to the new lab member which equipment is on which power-down schedule (stickers, labels, etc.) Which equipment has energy-saving modes to be aware of and use?
* Review available space in the cold storage units, how the lab keeps inventory, and when the new hire can expect to need to review what materials they have stored and do periodic cleanouts with the rest of the lab
* Cover PPE use, including whether lab coats get laundered (instead of single-use), how often they are cleaned, how to keep yours organized in the lab until laundry, etc.
* Cover lab purchasing – how to ask for materials or reagents, and whether your lab has a policy to only order once from the same supplier every week or every month to cut down on packaging. If there are other green purchasing policies your lab adheres to, cover these as well.
* What consumable supplies or solvents is the lab trying to reduce or reuse? How does that process work? How can the new hire get involved?
* Review who the lab’s sustainability point person is
* If your institution has a green team or green labs group, let the new hire know who to contact to get involved if they so choose