

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Developed from the October 2014 Chemistry Safety Seminar

Biological Waste Handling and Disinfection

When should I use bleach, ethanol and/or UV light to decontaminate my biosafety cabinet?

Bleach (or another EPA registered disinfectant) is required to be used following work with BSL-2 agents; spill or splashes of BSL-2 agents should also be cleaned up with bleach. Ethanol can be used after work with BSL-1 agents. EH&S does NOT recommend using UV light for disinfection.

What types of waste can be disinfected in an autoclave?

Solid biological wastes and liquid biological wastes from a BSL-2 or BSL-1 laboratory can be autoclaved. Do NOT autoclave chemical wastes.

Should we dispose of another laboratory's biological waste?

No. Laboratory personnel should NOT accept biological waste from another laboratory. All laboratories are responsible for the proper collection, security, and disposal of biological wastes generated in their lab spaces.

What happens to the biological waste once it is picked up from Chevron?

Biological waste is transported by University of Pittsburgh personnel to the autoclave facility in Scaife Hall for final processing and disposal.

Can I pour all disinfected liquid biological waste down the drain?

Yes. Liquid biological waste that has been disinfected with bleach (or another EPA-registered disinfectant) for the appropriate contact time (ex. at least 30 minutes for bleach; check label on disinfectant) should be poured directly down the drain while flushing with water. This should be done carefully to avoid splashing and aerosol generation. The drain should then be flushed with bleach or disinfectant of sufficient quantity to at least fill the trap.

How do I know if a syringe should be disposed of as a biological sharp or chemical sharp?

Information on sharps disposal is available in EH&S Guideline # 05-007, Sharps Disposal Guideline, http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/sharps_disposal.pdf.

How do I clean up a biological spill in my laboratory?

Information on cleaning up biological material spills is available in EH&S Guideline # 05-017, Biohazardous Spill Cleanup, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/bio-spill.pdf>.

Biological Hazard Signage and Notification

Do all laboratory doors require biohazard door signage if working with biological agents?

Yes. All laboratories must have a biohazard door sign if biological agents are stored and/or used within the lab space.

How do I know if the laboratory is a BSL-1 or BSL-2 laboratory?

All University labs must have a sign incorporating the universal biohazard symbol posted at the entrance to the laboratory where infectious agents are stored and/or used designating BSL-1 or BSL-2.

Is there an inventory of projects / laboratories approved to work with BSL-1 and BSL-2 agents?

Yes. EH&S maintains an inventory of approved research projects / labs approved to work with BSL-1 / BSL-2 agents.

Training

Does the entire laboratory staff need bloodborne pathogens (BBP) training if someone is working with BBP in the lab?

Yes. Access to the work area shall be restricted to authorized personnel. Only personnel trained on the potential hazards of BBP and who comply with the entry and exit procedures shall be allowed to enter.

Who is responsible for providing training for work in a biological instrumentation laboratory spaces?

The director / lab manager / PI is responsible for providing training for work in a biological instrumentation laboratory.

How often do I need to complete bloodborne pathogen training?

BBP training is required to be completed at least once every 12 months. Information is available at the following link, http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/workplace/web_training.html.

General Biological Safety**What type of PPE should be worn in a biological laboratory?**

PPE requirements are based on the agents in use (BSL-1 / BSL-2) and where they are handled (open bench vs. biosafety cabinet); Information on PPE is available on pages 7-8 of EH&S Guideline # 05-001, Bloodborne Pathogen ECP, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/blood-pathogens.pdf>.

Is it permissible to wear PPE outside of a BSL-2 laboratory?

No. PPE should NOT be worn outside of a biological laboratory (BSL-1 or BSL-2); all PPE should be removed in the laboratory and personnel should wash their hands.

How do I effectively conduct biological work within a biosafety cabinet?

Information on working safely within a biosafety cabinet is available in EH&S Guideline # 05-004, Biological Safety Cabinets, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/bio-cabinets.pdf>.

What do I do if I am exposed to a biological agent while working in the laboratory? Normal / off hours

Information on reporting exposure to a biological agent is available in EH&S Guideline # 05-005, Reporting Exposures to Potentially Infectious Material, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/incident-bio.pdf>.

How should I wash my biologically contaminated laboratory coat?

Laboratory coats should only be laundered through a commercial service; lab coats should NOT be washed in your home. Information on commercial laundry service is available through Duds 'N Suds (412)-681-1636.

If the freight elevator is out of service, can I use the stairs or passenger elevators to transport biological agents to another laboratory space?

If the freight elevator is out of service then the specimens may be transported via the steps. Consult EH&S Guideline # 03-017, Specimen Transport, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/SpecimenTransport.pdf>.

Are visitors allowed in biological laboratories during active work with bio agents?

Yes. Visitors are allowed in biological laboratories if the Principal Investigator / Lab Director authorize them to be in the lab and they must be escorted / accompanied at all times.

Should I use an emergency safety shower if I am exposed to a biological agent?

Yes. Information on exposure to a biological agent is available in University Guideline # 05-005, Reporting Exposures to Potentially Infectious Material, <http://www.ehs.pitt.edu/assets/docs/incident-bio.pdf>.

Are proteins considered a biological hazard?

No. Proteins are NOT considered to be biological hazards.

Do I need to decontaminate the freight elevator after transporting biological agents?

The elevator will only need to be decontaminated in the event of a spill or release.

Who is responsible for the management of biological laboratories and storage areas in the Chemistry Department?

Principal Investigators are responsible for the oversight of any work with or storage of biological agents in their laboratories or common lab spaces.

Can I wear gloves while using a keyboard / computer?

No. Gloves should NOT be worn when contacting common equipment such as a computer or computer keyboard. Labs may designate specific keyboards for use only while wearing gloves.