

<b>University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual</b>	<b>EH&amp;S Guideline Number: 05-023</b>	
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## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR BSL-3 WORKERS**

### **1. Introduction**

The University of Pittsburgh has established the following programs and guidelines for all faculty and staff that work in facilities operating at Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3). While there are site-specific requirements applicable to each BSL-3 facility, these guidelines are intended to provide the basis for the occupational health requirements for entering facilities operating at BSL-3 at the University of Pittsburgh.

The occupational health program at the University of Pittsburgh is administered by the Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) and the occupational health program along with all medical determinations are implemented by Employee Health Services. The Employee Health Services (*MyHealth@Work*) is located at Suite 500.59 of the Medical Arts Building at 3708 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, telephone number 412-647-4949; Fax number 412-647-5051; hours 7 AM – 3:30 PM.

### **2. BSL-3 Worker Health Screening**

The guidelines for entry requirements to each BSL-3 facility are developed with input from the principal investigator and/or BSL-3 scientific director, the University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety, Employee Health Services, and other experts with knowledge of the agent or associated infectious disease. Federal guidelines from the CDC, NIH, or American Practitioners of Infection Control regarding occupational health for specific BSL-3 agents will be implemented accordingly, if available.

Prior to initial entry into a BSL-3 facility, all University faculty, staff, and students are required to undergo a BSL-3 health screening utilizing the following procedure.

- 2.1 Complete the University of Pittsburgh BSL-3 worker health screening questionnaire and submit the questionnaire to Employee Health Services
- 2.2 Each individual will be contacted by Employee Health Services to schedule an in-person assessment
- 2.3 Based on the answers provided on the health questionnaire and during the in-person assessment, Employee Health Services may require additional information or testing. At this time, Employee Health Services will implement any required tests, vaccinations, or screening applicable to the facility in which the individual seeks entry, such as the collection of serum for baseline testing of antibody levels; the offering of required or recommended

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vaccinations; and/or the implementation of applicable screenings (e.g. tuberculosis)

2.4 Employee Health Services will notify the individual of the results of all tests and screenings in a confidential manner

2.5 Employee Health Services will provide Environmental Health and Safety and the individual's supervisor/laboratory director with an indication of the individual's "clearance" or approval to enter the intended BSL-3 facility

BSL-3 worker health screening information must be updated at least every 12 months or immediately upon change in health status or BSL-3 facilities entered. Examples of change in health status include pregnancy, medical conditions or drug therapies that impact the immune system, and changes in physical capabilities

### **3. Early Detection of Laboratory Acquired Infection**

The University of Pittsburgh implements the following procedures as a means to monitor and detect potential occupational exposure (i.e. lab-acquired infection) to BSL-3 agents as quickly as possible. All individuals that work in a BSL-3 facility must report all illness

3.1 If you feel comfortable reporting your symptoms to your supervisor, you may do so.

3.1.1 If your symptoms are definitely not related to the infectious agent you work with, then no further action is required

3.1.2 If your symptoms may be related to the infectious agent you work with, your supervisor will call Employee Health Services. Employee Health Services will call the ill worker at home

3.2 If you **do not** feel comfortable reporting your symptoms to your supervisor, you must call Employee Health Services at 412-647-4949

3.2.1 If your symptoms are not related to the infectious agent you work with, then Employee Health Services will notify your supervisor and no further action is required

3.2.2 If your symptoms **are or may be** related to the infectious agent you work with, then Employee Health Services will advise you what to do. Testing or monitoring may be requested to ensure you do not have a lab-acquired infection resulting from your work at BSL-3,

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and you may need to report to your PCP, to Employee Health Services, or to the Emergency Room

**4. Post-Exposure Evaluation and Treatment for BSL-3 Workers**

It is required that all BSL-3 workers immediately report any known exposure to potentially infectious agents. Such exposures may occur via needle stick or other sharps exposure, via a loss of integrity of respiratory protection, via an animal bite or scratch, or via another potential exposure route. Upon occupational exposure:

- 4.1 The exposed individual should immediately cease assignments and secure animals and/or BSL-3 agents. Request assistance for these tasks as necessary. In the event the wound is severe, call for emergency medical assistance at 412-624-2121.
- 4.2 The exposed individual must promptly follow established procedures for cleansing the wound site and for personal decontamination upon exiting the BSL-3 facility.
- 4.3 The individual should promptly notify a supervisor of the exposure.
- 4.4 After cleaning any wound and following exit procedures, the individual should immediately proceed to the Employee Health Services when the exposure occurs Monday through Friday between the hours of 7 AM and 3:30 PM. If the exposure occurs during non-business hours for the Employee Health Services, the individual should promptly report to the Emergency Department at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital.

**5. Respiratory Protection Program**

The University of Pittsburgh requires that all individuals must wear approved respiratory protection at all times while in research facilities operating at BSL-3.

Approved respiratory protection includes respirators rated at N-95 or greater, or personal air purifying respirators (PAPR). All individuals wearing respiratory protection with the exception of PAPR's must be enrolled in the University of Pittsburgh Respiratory Protection Program. The hallmarks of this program are an annual fit testing of respiratory protection, initial health screening for respirator users, and ongoing training regarding the use and limitations of the respiratory protection provided. See EH&S Guideline number 07-001

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**6. Other Information Related to Occupational Health for BSL-3 Workers**

6.1 All BSL-3 workers and visitors are required to have site-specific training and information prior to entering a BSL-3 facility. Such individuals should have prerequisite experience in BSL-3 environments. Prior to routine manipulation of BSL-3 agents, individuals should demonstrate proficiency in the safe handling of BSL-3 agents.

6.2 The University of Pittsburgh severely restricts the use of sharps in BSL-3 environments. Sharp safety devices are required to be utilized at all times in BSL-3 research facilities. For information on alternatives to sharps, please contact Environmental Health and Safety at 412-624-9505.

BSL-3 workers that have questions or concerns regarding BSL-3 environments are requested to contact the Department of Environmental Health and Safety for safety related questions (412-624-9505), and the Employee Health Services for health related questions (412-647-4949).