BioSide Lines

October 2002

The Newsletter of the UW Office of Biological Safety
www.fpm.wisc.edu/biosafety

Select Agent Update

We greatly appreciate the campus-wide cooperation that allowed OBS to meet the September 10 deadline for notifying CDC and USDA of possession of select agents and high consequence livestock pathogens and toxins. OBS submitted a composite report for the institution; no individuals or facilities were named. A request for additional information is anticipated in December that may require us to recontact some individuals.

The list of select agents is undergoing revision. If adopted as proposed, an aggregate toxin inventory would be required. The good news is that aflatoxins may be dropped from these regulations. Also, comments have been requested on the lists of animal and plant pathogens that are under consideration as select agents (see Federal Register 8/12/02, 67(155):52383-52389).

The new regulations will require that individuals who have access to select agents register with CDC or Dept. of Justice. The federal government may conduct background checks on criminal records and immigration status, and the Attorney General may approve or deny access. Details on how to meet this registration requirement are not yet available. Proposed regulations should be available for comment before the end of the year, to become final in March 2003.

We ask investigators who have access to these regulated materials to follow CDC's recommendations for safe and secure handling of these materials, as described in BMBL Appendices F and I (available as a link from the OBS website).

There are significant consequences of noncompliance with these new regulations. OBS has the responsibility of ensuring institutional compliance with these new requirements. We can do this only with your continued cooperation. **Inform OBS of any change in your status with regard to possession of these agents. Let us know if you plan to acquire an agent or to eliminate its use.** We will keep you informed as we learn more about these new rules.

The list of human and animal pathogens and toxins for which notification is required can be accessed at *http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/lrsat/saform.pdf*; the notifiable plant pathogens at *http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/bioterrorism/index.html*.

New HazMat Shipping Rules

The long awaited revision to DOT regulations for shipping infectious substances and diagnostic specimens are effective on October 1, 2002. In general, the changes make DOT regulations more consistent with the international (ICAO/IATA) regulations. Since our training for shipping biological materials has focused on the IATA regulations, many or all of these changes may not affect the way you ship HazMat packages. Please review these changes.

1) DOT now requires that biological toxins be shipped as Class 6.1. In the past, DOT allowed toxins to be shipped as Infectious Substances (Class 6.2). If samples contain infectious substances in addition to toxins, they should be shipped as Infectious Substances. The requirements for shipping toxins as Class 6.1 are significantly different than infectious substances. *Please contact OBS to request function specific training for these materials if you are required to ship toxins.*

2) The DOT adopted risk group definitions based on World Health Organization criteria. Various risk group lists are cited for reference. Appendix B of the NIH Guidelines is a primary reference. The ABSA risk group list is especially useful for international shipments. (Both lists are available as links from the biosafety website.)

3) The DOT packaging requirements for Infectious Substances now are consistent with IATA requirements.

4) The DOT regulations for shipping of diagnostic specimens have been made more consistent with IATA's.
   a) Labeling and packaging requirements have been made similar to IATA's.
   b) There is a new incident reporting requirement for shipping of diagnostic specimens. OBS can fulfill this reporting requirement once notified of a spill.
   c) The requirement for the OSHA biohazard label on the outside of the package of diagnostic specimens is now optional. We recommend that you continue to put this label on the outside package of diagnostic specimen shipments for hazard communication purposes. Diagnostic specimen packages should be marked "DIAGNOSTIC SPECIMEN PACKED IN COMPLIANCE WITH IATA PACKING INSTRUCTION 650".

5) Prions have been added to the definition of Infectious Substances (Class 6.2). Prions are RG2 or RG3 agents (depending on the species involved) so should be shipped as Infectious Substances.

This summary of the changes is meant to highlight those most likely to affect the biological materials shipped by staff at UW-Madison and is by no means complete.

Contact Margy Lambert at 263-9013 or mlambert@fpm.wisc.edu with any questions.

Basic Biosafety Class Offered

This class will give an overview of basic biological safety. Topics include: biosafety levels and biohazard containment, good microbiological techniques, waste disposal, risk assessment, and emergency preparedness. It is intended primarily for students and staff who are new to this institution and/or new to working in a laboratory. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Tuesday, November 12, 2002
Union South 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Registration is required. Contact Margy Lambert at 3-9013 or mlambert@fpm.wisc.edu.

Precautions for Transporting Potentially Hazardous Materials

When we bring up the subject of biosafety precautions for transportation, most people think about shipping an infectious substance by commercial carrier. This article, instead, will deal with transport precautions closer to home, between labs within a building and between buildings on campus.

What crosses your mind when you see someone walking down the hallway carrying “something or other” while wearing gloves and a lab coat? Like, maybe they’re wearing protective gear because otherwise they contaminate their hands and clothes with hazardous stuff? And, doorknobs, light switches, and elevator buttons could get contaminated from their touch? Could that someone occasionally be you? We hope not! We’re serious about the recommendation that gloves and lab coats should be left behind in the lab.

There are occasions when potentially hazardous materials need to be taken out of the lab. So, what is a person to do? Here are three simple steps to follow.

1) Decontaminate the outer surface. Place the biohazard bag in a pan and spritze it with disinfectant. Or, place the biohazard bag in another bag that is not contaminated.

2) Place the container in a pan or on a cart that can be decontaminated. A bucket with a handle may work well in some cases.
3) Be prepared to deal with a spill. Take disinfectant with you.

These recommendations apply equally to a low risk reagent in an ice bucket, a biohazard bag being taken to the autoclave around the corner, and stocks of highly virulent pathogen.

For transportation between buildings, a couple of precautions should be added. Use a secondary leak-proof container and an outer layer of sturdy packaging that could withstand a trip-and-fall, as would be required by the Department of Transportation Dangerous Goods Regulations if you were using a commercial carrier. And finally, mark the package with appropriate hazard communication.

Shipping Infectious Substances and Other Biological Materials

The Office of Biological Safety will provide training and certification for shipping infectious substances and other biological materials, with a focus on safety and regulatory compliance for research laboratories. The Department of Transportation requires that persons involved in shipping hazardous materials in commerce be trained and certified in proper handling of these materials.

Wednesday, October 9, 2002
Union South 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Refreshments will be served.

Registration is required. Contact Margy Lambert at 3-9013 or mlambert@fpm.wisc.edu.

Staff approaching their two-year expiration for certification will receive a notice in advance of that date. All staff are welcome to attend the class. Computer-based training is available as an alternative, but only for those who have attended the class for their original certification.

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