

Appendix B: Packaging & Transporting Biological Agents and Lab Specimens

The following guidelines are based upon currently available information from the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Transportation. For additional information on shipping hazardous materials, including infectious substances, contact EHS's Environmental Programs Office at 206-685-2848.

A. Packaging for transport outside the laboratory.

When packing materials for transportation within the same building but through public areas, the following guidelines apply. (University Medical Center and Harborview Medical Center have specific requirements for transporting materials in their facility. These requirements are found in the hospital's infection control manual.)

1. Wearing gloves during transport is not a substitute for proper packaging of materials. If one believes gloves are necessary then the specimen is not properly packaged.
2. Specimens of blood or other potentially infectious materials must be placed in a container, which prevents leakage during collection, handling, processing, storage, transport or shipping. This container is referred to as the primary container. For example, a test tube is a primary container.
3. The primary container must be closed prior to being stored, transported or shipped. For example, the test tube must have a tight fitting cap or the cap must be taped in place or otherwise secured.
4. The primary container does not have to have a biohazard label or be red in color if the container is recognizable as containing specimens and all personnel handling it practice Universal Precautions.
5. The primary container is placed within a watertight secondary container. For example, the test tube is placed in a sealable plastic bag. It is good practice to place absorbing material between the bag and tube to cushion the tube and absorb leakage from improperly sealed tubes. It is mandatory that absorbing material be used for items transported on the Health Sciences Express bus or in other motor vehicles.
6. These packages are then placed in an outer transport container that is labeled with the biohazard label. This container can be a cardboard box with a styrofoam liner, a cooler or other sturdy transport container.

7. If the material is not transported by the original packager (i.e., by courier or Health Sciences Express bus) the outer transport container must show the following information in addition to the biohazard label:
 - a. Identification of the material being transported - for example human blood, animal blood, cultures, etc.
 - b. the name, department, building, Box number and phone number of receiving party
 - c. the name and phone number of the sender
 - d. date sent.

B. Transporting materials from one building to another.

1. If the material is being hand carried by laboratory personnel, or transported in a University vehicle by University personnel, the material can be packaged as indicated above. This includes:
 - a. UW sponsored couriers,
 - b. research personnel transporting material and
 - c. materials transported on the Health Sciences Express bus.
2. All material transported by non-UW personnel must comply with current US Department of Transportation regulations. This includes:
 - a. non-UW couriers,
 - b. taxis or
 - c. in any other non-UW motor vehicle;
 - d. or materials packaged to be mailed or shipped via a private contractor
 - 1) U.S. Postal Service,
 - 2) Federal Express or
 - 3) Airborne Express, etc.

Anyone involved in packaging, shipping or preparing paperwork for the shipment of hazardous materials including infectious substances must have task specific [training](#):

- a. prior to beginning this assignment and
- b. be re-trained every two years.

For additional information on shipping training, contact EHS's Environmental Programs Office at 206-685-2848.

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