



THREAT PREPAREDNESS & BIOTERRORISM RESPONSE LABORATORY  
OFFICE OF LABORATORY SERVICES  
BUREAU OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
167 ELEVENTH AVENUE, SOUTH CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25303  
<http://www.wvdhhr.org/labservices> Phone (304) 558-3530 Ext. 2301 FAX (304) 558-2006

## **WEST VIRGINIA BIOTERRORISM RESPONSE CLINICAL SPECIMEN SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

County Medical Examiners are essential partners in Bioterrorism preparedness. They play an important role in the response to a known biological attack as well as in the surveillance for a covert attack because of their state statutory authority to investigate deaths that are sudden, suspicious, violent, unattended, and unexplained. The same principle applies to the investigation and surveillance of an event of biological warfare or biological terrorism. Clinical specimens from suspected bioterrorism-related cases should be submitted to the Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) through the Laboratory Response Network channel, in which the specimen is initially submitted to a Sentinel Level Laboratory for preliminary identification, or, if deemed necessary, the clinical specimen can be submitted directly to the OLS.

Certain hospital and other clinical laboratories in West Virginia performing microbiological testing are recognized as the Sentinel Level (Formerly Level A) Laboratories for the CDC Laboratory Response Network for the state. These laboratories perform only minimal identification, e.g., “rule-out” testing. The Office of Laboratory Services Threat Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section is recognized as the only Reference Level (Formerly Level B/Level C) Laboratory for confirmatory identification of *Bacillus anthracis*, *Yersinia pestis*, *Francisella tularensis*, *Brucella spp.*, and other agents of Bioterrorism.

If you have any questions about isolating, identifying or submitting an organism that may be an agent of Bioterrorism, call the **Office of Laboratory Services Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section at (304) 558-3530 ext. 2301** during regular work hours 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

If you have other general questions pertaining to Bioterrorism, you should call your Local Health Department first. If you need further information, you may call the **Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program of the WV Bureau for Public Health at (304) 558-5358 or (800) 423-1271** during normal work hours 8 AM to 5 PM Monday through Friday.

### **CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY**

Chain-of-Custody is considered appropriate for non-human specimens or items that are followed and examined for evidentiary purposes. **Chain-of-Custody applies to clinical specimens from forensic death investigations** submitted to OLS for Bioterrorism agent identification. Medical Examiner facilities should, therefore, still maintain a suspicious isolate or specimen for further forensic investigation after a specimen is determined negative for the presence of a Bioterrorism agent. Clinical specimens submitted to OLS from hospitals meet this requirement through normal hospital practices.

### **SENTINEL LEVEL TESTING – PRELIMINARY IDENTIFICATION**

County Medical Examiners should not attempt to perform any identification on specimens which are suspected to contain an agent of Bioterrorism. **“Rule-out” testing for potential Bioterrorism agents using Sentinel Level protocols should be performed by Sentinel Level Laboratories only.** Before submitting a specimen to a Sentinel Level Laboratory, (i.e. the hospital laboratory) for preliminary identification, please notify the **Laboratory Director** and the **Infection Control Officer** in advance that the specimen may contain a Bioterrorism agent. For further information on Sentinel Level laboratories and their testing protocols, please visit the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) Biological Weapons Resource Center website at: [www.asm.org/Policy/index.asp?bid=520](http://www.asm.org/Policy/index.asp?bid=520) and/or the CDC Emergency Preparedness & Response website at: [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov).

For detailed descriptions of safety procedures, microbiological practices, and packaging and shipping information, please refer to the *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories*, United States Department of Health and Human Services, 4th Ed., edited by J.Y. Richmond and R.W. McKinney, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999. The BMBL is also available at: [www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/biosfty/bmbl4/bmbl4s1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/biosfty/bmbl4/bmbl4s1.htm).



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## **WEST VIRGINIA BIOTERRORISM RESPONSE CLINICAL SPECIMEN SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

If you have a suspected agent of Bioterrorism and need to submit a clinical specimen directly to the Office of Laboratory Services Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section for confirmatory testing, please follow the procedure guidelines provided on these information sheets. These guidelines are subject to change in order to improve the LRN system. Any changes or updates will be forwarded to recognized Sentinel Laboratories and County Medical Examiners upon approval.

### **REFERENCE LEVEL TESTING – CONFIRMATORY IDENTIFICATION**

Before submitting a specimen directly to the OLS, please notify the state **Office of Chief Medical Examiner**. To submit a clinical specimen that is suspected for the presence of a potential Bioterrorism agent, you must first contact the **Office of Laboratory Services Threat Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section** and the **Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program (IDEP) of the WV Bureau for Public Health** for approval of specimen. Next you must obtain an EOC Message Number through the WV Office of Emergency Services for tracking purposes. Please also notify your Local Health Department's designated Threat Preparedness Contact.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### Office of Laboratory Services, Threat Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section

OLS Duty Officer on call

(304) 558-3530 x2301 (Office Phone 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM during business hours)

(304) 361-9080 (Emergency Pager after 5:00 PM M-F, weekends, holidays)

#### West Virginia Office of Emergency Services

(304) 558-5380 (24/7 Contact Number)

#### Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program (IDEP, WVBPH)

Duty Officer (Epidemiologist) on call

(304) 558-5358 (Office Phone 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM during business hours)

1-888-882-5135 (IDEP Emergency Pager after 5:00 PM M-F, weekends, holidays)

#### West Virginia Bureau for Public Health

(304) 540-5719 (Bureau for Public Health Emergency Pager after hours and holidays)

### **REQUIRED FORMS**

Please submit a "Suspected Bioterrorism Agent Clinical Specimen Submission Form" with each clinical specimen.

### **PACKAGING AND TRANSPORT**

Shipment of clinical specimens should comply with current federal and/or International Air Transport Association (IATA) packaging and shipping guidelines. Only personnel specially trained in packaging and shipping are to package and ship clinical specimens to the OLS Reference Level Laboratory.

Please follow the packaging requirements in accordance with the IATA dangerous goods regulations for transport of biological agents of human disease or materials that are known or suspected of containing them (infectious substances), which consists of triple packaging of the specimen (primary receptacle, water tight secondary packaging, and durable outer packaging). This packaging also requires the "Infectious Substance" label shown on the outside of the package. The packaging materials used must be certified to meet rigorous performance tests as outlined in the DOT, USPS, PHS, and IATA regulations. Check the "WV Shipping of Infectious Substances by Air Transportation (IATA) Checklist" for a quick reference of the guidelines. You must include "**Attn: Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section**" in the address on the outside of the package.

Please submit each specimen using FedEx Priority Overnight shipping. To obtain the rules and regulations for shipping infectious substances via FedEx, please see the FedEx Dangerous Goods Service Information website at [www.fedex.com/us/services/express/addservopt/dangerousgoods/](http://www.fedex.com/us/services/express/addservopt/dangerousgoods/).