



**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>

## ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIMEN SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services will be considered the Reference Level (Formerly Level B and 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 collecting or submitting an environmental specimen that may contain an agent of Bioterrorism, call the **West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services (WVOLS), Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section at (304) 558-3530 ext. 2301** during regular work hours 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

If you have a suspected agent of Bioterrorism and need to submit an environmental specimen to the West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services, Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section for confirmatory testing, please follow the procedure guidelines provided on this information sheet.

### Whom to Contact

To submit an environmental specimen that may contain a potential Bioterrorism agent, you must first contact your Local Health Department (LHD) Threat Preparedness Contact and the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program 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 (WVOES) for tracking purposes. Please also notify the **WV Office of Laboratory Services Threat Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Section** in advance.

### Updated 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 - 5:00 PM during business hours)

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

WV Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (Formerly Office of Emergency Services)

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

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FOR OBTAINING AFTER HOURS BPH EMERGENCY CONSULTATION:

### EPI CONSULTATION (Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program):

For after hours emergency epidemiological consultation or disease reporting, please call;

(304) 558-5358 (Local)

1-800-423-1271 (Toll Free)

Follow the instructions given for how to contact the duty officer on call. This system allows for changes in on-call pagers, assuring coverage when a pager is out of service.

Previously, IDEP had an "on call" pager with the pager number distributed directly. That system is no longer in use and you will not receive an answer using that number. Please make note of this change and use the numbers above to obtain help in an emergency including submission of an environmental specimen.

### ALL OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES:

For all other public health emergencies, please call;

(304) 558-2971 (Main number for the Bureau for Public Health).

The after hours message gives instructions for how to reach a duty officer on call for the agency.



## ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIMEN SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### Collection of Specimens

Environmental specimens should be obtained and packaged appropriately to preclude potential exposure to those handling the specimen in transit and at the laboratory. For proper protocols for the collection of environmental specimens, please refer to the following information, "Procedures for Collection of Environmental Specimens" and/or "Procedures for Collection of Sterile Swabs for Surface Sampling" that can be found on the TP & BT Response website at : [www.wvdhhr.org/labservices](http://www.wvdhhr.org/labservices). Further guidance can be found at the CDC Emergency Preparedness & Response website at: [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov).

Environmental specimens should be packaged for delivery to WVOLS using the following guidelines.

- Environmental specimens should be bagged at the incident scene so that no contamination of the outer container occurs. Only one specimen per bag.
- Environmental specimens must be triple bagged. Properly packaged specimens should be placed in an outer Bio-hazard bag and labeled appropriately with the EOC Message Number provided by the WV Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (Formerly the OES).
- Do not seal any of the bags with duct tape. Please seal with evidence tape and sign and date.
- Environmental specimens that will not fit into the Bio-Safety hood cannot be processed without potential exposure of laboratory staff. If an environmental specimen is larger than **10 H x 22 W x 15 D inches**, then environmental sampling protocols must be utilized on the specimen. **DO NOT SUBMIT THE WHOLE ITEM.**
- At least 4 swabs should be collected and sent for each submission. **USE ONLY DACRON SYNTHETIC SWABS.** Do not use cotton swabs as this will invalidate the specimen.
- Submit only the sample to be tested. **DO NOT SEND:** clothing and materials used in clean-up procedures; miscellaneous items off contaminated surfaces such as office supplies, etc.; and personal clothing from victims. Please follow appropriate decontamination procedures.

### Receipt of Specimens at WVOLS

Specimen submission forms should accompany the specimen from the scene to the laboratory. The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) no longer accepts environmental specimens for the WVOLS. Environmental specimens must now be **directly delivered to WVOLS.**

- Call the lab at least **one (1) hour** in advance to deliver environmental specimens during regular business hours.
- Call the lab at least **two (2) hours** in advance to deliver environmental specimens after working hours.
- HIGH PRIORITY environmental specimens will be analyzed IMMEDIATELY upon receipt (24/7).
- INTERMEDIATE PRIORITY environmental specimens will be analyzed during NORMAL WORKING HOURS or on the following regular business day.
- LOW PRIORITY environmental specimens will not be tested. **DO NOT SUBMIT.**
- Environmental specimens will only be accepted from Law Enforcement Officials, FBI, Postal Inspectors, Civil Support Teams, Regional Response Teams, Fire Department Personnel, or LHD Representatives. Environmental specimens **will not** be directly accepted from private citizens.
- Environmental specimens must be submitted within one week of collection to be deemed acceptable.



## ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIMEN SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### Required Forms and Signatures

A "Suspected Bioterrorism Environmental Specimen Submission Form" must accompany each environmental specimen. A signature is required for the WVOLS Chain-of-Custody form upon receipt.

### Guidelines for the Release of Environmental Specimens

Once a specimen has been deemed negative for the identification of a potential BT agent, the OLS TP & BT Response Section request that a representative from the submitting agency(s) be sent to the OLS to pick up the environmental specimen within **30 DAYS**.

- Persons eligible for the release of environmental specimens are law enforcement personnel, representatives from the submitting local health department, FBI, or the victim.
- Please notify OLS **two 2 hours** in advance of pick-up in order that the environmental specimen will be ready when you arrive.
- When notifying the OLS TP & BT Response Section, please give the **EOC # (Message Number)** of the environmental specimen to be picked up and the **COUNTY** in which the specimen was collected.
- Release of the environmental specimen requires picture identification (example driver's license, etc.) and a signature on the OLS TP & BT Response Section chain-of-custody form.

### Notice of Destruction of Unclaimed Environmental Specimens

Specimens of powder only will be destroyed after being determined negative unless otherwise requested at the time of receipt. All specimens that are not claimed within **60 DAYS** will be **DESTROYED**. IT IS IMPORTANT that the victim be notified of this policy before submitting a specimen, preferably in written form.

### REFERENCE: State of West Virginia Threat Assessment and Notification Procedure for Suspect Bioterrorist Events Document.

According to the previous mentioned document, when a possible BT exposure incident is reported, then local 911 will always be notified. 911 shall notify local law enforcement (LLE) or WVSP. The LLE or WVSP will respond to and evaluate the situation. LLE or WVSP should make the initial assessment to determine what further action is necessary. If LLE or WVSP believes that a BT exposure incident is credible, they will manage the scene and detain and/or identify involved persons. LLE or WVSP will contact 911 who will notify the local OES Director, local health department (LHD), FBI, and any other agency in accordance with local emergency operations plans. LLE or WVSP will then work with the LHD and the local OES to determine what actions need to be taken. If LLE or WVSP, local OES and LHD together confirm that a BT event is credible, then the local OES Director will contact WV Division of Homeland Security (formerly WVOES) and the LHD will contact WVBPH (via standard 24 hour reporting / consultation numbers). WVBPH Division of Threat Preparedness (DTP) will then coordinate a state-local conference call with the applicable LLE, local OES, LHD, FBI, WVSP, WVOES, WVBPH, WVOLS Section of Threat Preparedness (WVOLS TP), and other individuals and agencies, as appropriate to the situation. The WVBPH Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program (IDEP) will serve as designated back-up for convening of this conference call. The purpose of the call is to discuss the facts surrounding the incident, to assure all applicable parties are notified, and to collectively affirm what actions (including laboratory testing) need to be taken. If multiple simultaneous incidents overwhelm the system and make conference calls as stated above unfeasible, or if WVBPH DTP or IDEP cannot convene a conference call within 30 minutes, then determination of the next steps, including laboratory testing, will be done by the LHD in conjunction with LLE and local OES, in direct consultation with WVBPH-DTP (IDEP as back up), and WVOLS TP. WVOLS TP shall conduct laboratory tests (or arrange for tests to be conducted by appropriate laboratories) on environmental specimens as necessary for confirmation of disease agents. WVOLS will report laboratory results of the environmental specimen to the LHD, IDEP, WVOES, the submitting Law Enforcement Official, and the FBI and/or postal inspector service.