



**I. 8.5.7 Biological Safety**

Chapter 8 - Health & Safety	Original Effective Date: May 2013
Section: 8.5 Environmental Health and Safety Office	Date Last Reviewed: May 2021
Responsible Entity: Vice President for Facilities and Capital Planning	Date Last Revised: May 2021

**II. Purpose**

The UT Health San Antonio (UTHSA) Biological Safety Program assists all levels of management in fulfilling UTHSA's commitment to provide an environment for high quality research, teaching, and learning while maintaining a safe workplace, and complying with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

**III. Scope**

This Policy applies to all UTHSA faculty, staff, associated students, and others who work with biological agents and/or recombinant DNA (rDNA) or may be exposed in the work or learning environment.

**IV. Policy**

UTHSA is committed to the development, maintenance, and support of a comprehensive plan for the research and clinical community that has as its primary purpose the safety of all individuals who deal with, control, research, or come in contact with biological agents and toxins. UTHSA is committed to ensuring that all activities of a potentially biological hazardous nature are safely conducted.

All UTHSA faculty, staff, and associated students are expected to engage in prudent practices necessary to protect people and the environment from Biological Hazards through conformance with the federal, state, and local regulations, guidelines and UTHSA policies.

**A. Biological Safety Handbook**

The [Biological Safety Handbook](#) (Handbook) provides university-wide safety guidelines, policies and procedures for the use and manipulation of biohazardous and potentially biohazardous materials. The Handbook provides information on how to minimize the risk to personnel from exposures to biohazards through the application of administrative, engineering, and work practice controls and by increasing awareness of the Biological Hazards that may be encountered in research, clinical, and teaching laboratories.

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All faculty, staff, students and other who work with biological agents and rDNA must be familiar with and conduct their operations in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Handbook and any applicable regulations and guidelines.

Other institutional policies and plans, for example the [Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan](#) and [TB Exposure Control Plan](#), may apply as determined by an individual's job duties.

### B. Responsibilities

#### 1. Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Department

The EH&S Department is responsible for establishing safety standards, regulations, guidelines, and programs designed to assure compliance with federal, state, and local rules and regulations. Environmental Health and Safety encompasses radiological, chemical, biological, physical safety and environmental protection.

#### 2. EH&S Department, Biological Safety Division

- a. Maintain the [Biological Safety Handbook](#) for the use of biological agents at UTHSA with the advice and guidance of the Institutional Biosafety Committee.
- b. Provide technical assistance to laboratory supervisors and workers concerning appropriate storage, handling, and disposal of biological agents.
- c. Provide training in Basic Biological Safety, Basic Bloodborne Pathogens, and specialized training upon request.
- d. Perform injury/accident investigations related to potential biological exposures.
- e. Advise the Institutional Biosafety Committee and Infection Policy and Education Committee on matters pertaining to Biological Safety.
- f. Research protocol review of infectious agents and/or recombinant and synthetic nucleic acids in support of the Institutional Biosafety Committee.
- g. Conduct clinical/laboratory safety evaluations.
- h. Administer Select Agent Program/Biosafety Level 3 facilities.
- i. Review policies and institutional plans as they pertain to biological agents.
- j. Remain current on rules and regulations concerning biological agent safety.

#### 3. Faculty and Staff in charge of supervising laboratories

- a. Inform and train employees concerning risks posed by the biological agents worked with in their laboratory/work area.
- b. Retain training records and all documentation.
- c. Implement and enforce rules and standards concerning health and safety for laboratories under Faculty/Supervisor's jurisdiction.
- d. Ensure compliance of laboratory workers with the [Biological Safety Handbook](#) and institutional policies and plans as they pertain to biological agents.

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- e. Ensure the availability and enforce the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - f. Remain cognizant of biological agents stored and used in laboratories and their associated hazards.
  - g. Follow institutional waste disposal procedures for biological agents.
  - h. Conduct internal inspections of laboratories for health and safety concerns.
  - i. Request assistance from the EH&S Department when safety requirements are not fully understood.
  - j. Report all spills and exposures of biological agents to the EH&S Office as soon as possible.
4. Employees (faculty and staff) and Students working in laboratories
- a. Follow all health and safety standards and rules.
  - b. Attend or take all required training classes to stay in compliance with relevant rules and regulations.
  - c. Immediately report all hazardous conditions to the supervisor.
  - d. Wear or use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times as determined by the agent's risk and for laboratory procedures that pose a risk for injury or exposure.
  - e. Report any job-related injuries or illnesses to the supervisor and seek treatment immediately.
  - f. Refrain from the operation of any equipment or instrumentation without proper instruction and authorization.
  - g. Ask questions if the safe use of biological agents, or operating procedures are unclear.
  - h. Remain aware of the hazards of the biological agents in the laboratory and how to handle these agents safely.

## V. Definitions

When used in this document, the following words have the meaning set forth below unless a different meaning is required by context.

Biohazard (general definition) - A biohazardous agent is one that is biological in nature, capable of replication in a host or the environment, and capable of producing deleterious effects upon other biological organisms, particularly humans. Biohazards are biological agents or biological substances present in or arising from the work environment that present or may present a hazard to the health or well-being of the worker or community.

Biological Safety or Biosafety - the application of knowledge, techniques, equipment, and facility design to prevent personal, laboratory and environmental exposure to potentially infectious agents or biohazards.

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### VI. Related References

[Environmental Health and Safety Department](#)

[EHS Plans and Resources site](#) with hazard specific safety handbooks, safety fact sheets, guidance documents, plans, policies, and standard operating procedures.

### VII. Review and Approval History

The approving authority of this policy is the University Executive Committee.

Effective Date	Action Taken	Approved By	Approved Date
05/2013	Policy Origination		
09/2018	Policy Revision		
05/2021	Policy Revision, discretionary edits		