

UTHealth Emergency Response Plan for Biohazardous Materials Inclusive of Recombinant and Synthetic Nucleic Acids

Title: Personal Contamination**Section:** Biological Safety**IBC Approval Date:** February 2016**Revision Date:** September 11, 2025

Personnel exposures to infectious agents can arise from a variety of incidents, including aerosols, splashes of liquid into mucous membrane or broken skin, percutaneous injury and animal scratches or bites. In the event of any incident of this type involving biohazardous materials or recombinant or synthetic nucleic acids, the immediate response should be directed toward caring for the affected individual(s). The following procedures are provided as a guideline for response to accidental exposures to personnel. Any exposure incident involving infectious materials or recombinant or synthetic nucleic acids should be immediately reported to Environmental Health & Safety at 713-500-8100 or after hours via the EHS hotline at 713-500-5832. After administering immediate first aid as needed, the affected individual(s) should seek medical treatment at the UT Employee/Student Health Services. If the exposure or injury is severe or occurs after normal work hours or on weekends or holidays, the employee should go to Hermann Hospital TMC Emergency Room for evaluation and treatment. Subsequent notification and follow up assessment can then be performed during normal working hours by UT Employee/Student Health Services as necessary.

Incidents Involving Biological Materials:

Contamination to the body:

1. Immediately remove contaminated clothing and drench skin with water. Wash with soap and water and flush the area for 15 minutes. Avoid the use of bleach and other disinfecting agents that are caustic to the skin.
2. Seek additional medical assistance from first aid providers if necessary.
3. Report the incident to the Principal Investigator or supervisor and complete the Supervisor's First Report of Injury form.

Splash to the Eye

1. Immediately flush the eye with a gentle stream of clean temperate water (or saline if available) for 15 minutes. Hold the eyelid open and rotate the eye in the socket. Be careful not to wash the contaminant into the other eye.
2. Seek additional medical assistance from first aid providers if necessary.
3. Report the incident to the Principal Investigator or supervisor and complete Supervisor's First Report of Injury form.

Punctures/Laceration of the Skin

1. Wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water and rinse the area for 15 minutes.
2. Allow small wounds such as punctures to bleed freely. There is no evidence that additional squeezing or “milking” of the puncture site is beneficial in preventing infection.
3. Control more severe bleeding with direct compression on the wound with sterile dressings. Wear disposable gloves to prevent exposure to biohazards/blood/body fluids.
4. The application of antiseptics or disinfectants may be beneficial, however, avoid the use of bleach or other disinfecting agents that are caustic to the skin.
5. Seek additional medical assistance from first aid providers if necessary.
6. If necessary call UTPD at 911 for assistance and transportation to Memorial Hermann TMC. If the injured person is also potentially contaminated with a harmful chemical or biological material give this information to the dispatcher so that emergency responders can arrive prepared for the additional hazards.
7. Report the incident to the Principal Investigator or supervisor and complete Supervisor’s First Report of Injury form.

Severe Life Threatening Injuries:

1. Call UTPD at 911 for assistance and transportation to Memorial Hermann TMC Emergency Room. If the injured person is also potentially contaminated with a harmful chemical or biological material give this information to the dispatcher so that emergency responders can arrive prepared for the additional hazards.
2. Give first aid if trained to do so and only if you can do so without exposing yourself.
3. A designated member of the laboratory will provide information about the accident/exposure and if an exposure is involved will provide a copy of the Safety Data Sheet to emergency responders if applicable and to the medical staff at the hospital.
4. Report the incident to the Principal Investigator or supervisor and complete the Supervisor’s First Report of Injury form.

Reporting:

It is the responsibility of all UTHealth personnel to report any significant spills, personnel exposures or unauthorized research using biohazardous agents and/or recombinant and synthetic nucleic acids material to Environmental Health & Safety. Initial reporting must be done as soon as possible via phone or email, and at the latest within 24 hours of the incident. If recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid research is involved, EHS will report the incident to the NIH Office of Science Policy (<https://osp.od.nih.gov/>) as necessary. This will include an initial phone call or email report, followed by a full detailed written report within 30 days of the incident. See the Recombinant and Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecule [Incident Reporting Template](#) for additional information.

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Biosafety Committee.

UTHealth Houston Institutional Biosafety Committee Chair