

# Biohazard Communication (Labels)



## Overview

A biohazard warning label must be posted on equipment and work areas containing infectious agents, human blood, or other potentially infectious materials, and on all biological waste containers. Labeling alerts visitors, emergency response personnel, and WCM staff to a potential biological hazard. This Update outlines biohazard communication labeling requirements at the WCM.

## Applicability

This Update applies to:

- All biological waste containers.
- Refrigerators, freezers, incubators, centrifuges, and any other equipment used to store or process infectious agents, human blood, or other potentially infectious materials.
- Work areas where contamination from infectious agents, human blood, or other potentially infectious materials is reasonably expected and may be left unattended (e.g., blood workup area decontaminated once a day).

Room signage and shipping container labels are covered under different programs. For more information on shipping of biological materials, please refer to [EHS Program Manual 6.2 – Biological Material and Dry Ice Shipments](#). To request a Health and Safety door sign for your facility, please contact EHS at [ehs@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ehs@med.cornell.edu).

## Responsibilities

- **Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)** acts as a resource to the WCM community, providing technical assistance and guidance on label placement and can provide biohazard labels to laboratories on a limited basis.
- **Principal Investigators and Supervisors** ensure that all personnel adhere to the labeling requirements within this Update.
- **Personnel Using Infectious Agents, Human Blood or Other Potentially Infectious Materials** label the work area, equipment, and waste containers; and seek assistance from their supervisor or EHS as needed.

## Procedures

Warning labels are affixed to all containers, equipment, and work areas listed in the applicability section above. The labels must have a fluorescent-orange or orange-red background with lettering or symbols in a contrasting color and include the following biohazard symbol:



Limited supplies of labels are available from EHS. For larger numbers of labels or different sizes, contact EHS for suppliers.

**The use of red bags or red containers for biological waste may denote a biohazard, but warning labels are also required.**

## Definitions

- **Blood** means human blood, human blood components, and products made from human blood.
- **Other Potentially Infectious Materials** means (1) The following human body fluids: semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, any bodily fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids; (2) Any unfixed tissue or organ (other than intact skin) from a human (living or dead); and (3) HIV-containing cell or tissue cultures, organ cultures, and HIV- or HBV-containing culture medium or other solutions; as well as blood, organs, or other tissues from experimental animals infected with HIV or HBV.
- **Infectious Agent** means any disease-causing microorganism, e.g., bacteria, virus, or fungus, that is likely to be transmitted and pose a threat to the health of humans and is designated for containment at Biosafety Level 2 (BSL2) or higher.

## References

- EHS Program Safety Manual, Section 3.1 – [Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan](#)
- 29 CFR, §1910.1030, Bloodborne pathogens, Occupational Safety and Health Administration



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