

BIOTERRORISM RESPONSE ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) is considered the Reference Level 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 sample that may contain an agent of Bioterrorism, please call the OLS Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Laboratory Section at (304) 558-3530 extension 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 sample to OLS for confirmatory testing, please follow the procedure guidelines provided on this information sheet.

Whom to Contact

To submit an environmental sample that may contain a potential Bioterrorism agent, you must first contact your Local Health Department (LHD) Threat Preparedness coordinator and the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology of the WV Bureau for Public Health at 304-558-5358 for approval of submission. Before sending, you must also notify the OLS Threat-Preparedness & Bioterrorism Response Laboratory.

Additional Contacts

WV Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
304-558-5380 (24/7 Contact Number)

Bureau for Public Health
304-558-2971

Collection of Samples

Environmental samples 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 our website at www.dhhr.wv.gov/ols. Further guidance

can be found at the CDC Emergency Preparedness & Response website at: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/bioterrorism/index.asp>.

Environmental samples should be packaged for delivery to OLS using the following guidelines:

- Environmental samples should be bagged at the incident scene so that no contamination of the outer container occurs. Only one sample per bag.
- Environmental sample must be triple bagged. Properly packaged samples should be placed in an outer bio-hazard bag and labeled appropriately with identifying information.
- Do not seal any of the bags with duct tape. Please seal with evidence tape and sign and date.
- Environmental samples that will not fit into the biosafety cabinet cannot be processed without potential exposure of laboratory staff. If an environmental sample 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 OLS

Sample submission forms must accompany the sample from the scene to the laboratory. Submitters must call the lab at least one (1) hour in advance to deliver environmental samples during regular business hours. For after-hours submissions, submitters must call the lab at least two (2) hours in advance to deliver environmental samples.

- **HIGH PRIORITY** environmental samples will be analyzed IMMEDIATELY upon receipt (24/7).
- **INTERMEDIATE PRIORITY** environmental samples will be analyzed during NORMAL WORKING HOURS or on the following regular business day.
- **LOW PRIORITY** environmental samples will not be tested. DO NOT SUBMIT.

Environmental samples will only be accepted from Law Enforcement Officials, FBI, Postal Inspectors, Civil Support Teams, Regional Response Teams, Fire Department Personnel, or LHD Representatives. Environmental samples will not be directly accepted from private citizens.

Environmental samples must be submitted within one week of collection to be deemed acceptable.

Required Forms and Signatures

A “Suspected Bioterrorism Environmental Sample Submission Form” must accompany each environmental specimen. A signature is required on the OLS chain of custody form upon receipt.

Guidelines for the Release of Environmental Samples

Once a sample has been deemed negative for the identification of a potential BT agent, OLS requests that a representative from the submitting agency(s) be sent to the OLS to pick up the

environmental sample within 30 DAYS of reporting. Persons eligible for the release of environmental samples 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 sample will be ready when you arrive. Release of the environmental sample requires picture identification (example driver's license, etc.) and a signature on the OLS chain of custody form.

Notice of Destruction of Unclaimed Environmental Samples

Samples 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 and Emergency Management (DHSEM) and the LHD will contact WVBPH (via standard 24 hour reporting and 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 Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) 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 DIDE 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 (DIDE 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, DIDE, DHSEM, the submitting Law Enforcement Official, and the FBI and/or postal inspector service.