Illinois Department of Public Health  
Division of Laboratories

Guidelines for Packaging and Shipping Biological Substances Category B

The following guidelines were prepared to assist submitters shipping diagnostic specimens. *This information does not meet the training requirements as required by IATA 1.5 and DOT 49 CFR 172.700.*

**Items needed prior to shipping**

- Form (available from the commercial carrier, such as U.S. Postal Service express mail, FedEx, DHL, etc.)
- Triple package system as described below
- Absorbent material (cotton balls, paper towels, super absorbent packet)
- Biohazard label for secondary container (if not pre-printed on secondary container)
- Recipient’s name and address
- Sender’s name, address and phone number
- UN 3373 Biological Substance Category B label

**Triple Package System**

1. Water-tight primary container - 1L maximum volume per single primary container; 4L maximum volume per multiple containers (glass, metal or plastic).
   
   Examples: Culture tube (*Reinforce screw caps with tape*)
   
   Vacutainer tube
   
   Plastic specimen container

2. Secondary container (labeled with a biohazard label)
   
   For **solid specimens** (cultures, swabs, etc.)
   
   Examples: Plastic container capable of being tightly sealed
   
   Sealable styrofoam container (1 inch thick minimum)
   
   Sealed plastic bag

   For **liquid specimens** (blood, sputum, urine, etc.)
   
   Example: 95 kPA bag (tightly sealed)

3. Sturdy Outer Packaging (one side must be a minimum of 4 inches).
   
   **Acceptable outer packages**
   
   Examples: Heavy corrugated fiberboard
   
   Wood, metal, rigid plastic, rigid cooler

   **Unacceptable outer packages**
   
   Examples: Styrofoam boxes, plastic bags, paper envelopes

**Packaging**

- Place enough absorbent material to absorb the entire contents between primary and secondary containers.
- Place labeled primary container (specimen) in biohazard labeled secondary container.
- If packaging multiple fragile specimens, wrap individually or separate to prevent contact.

(over)
• Place test requisition, which may serve as the itemized list of contents, between secondary and outer shipping container.
• If necessary, add cushioning material to the outer container to make the secondary container siftproof. Seal outer shipping container securely with tape.

Outer Package Marking

• Label with exact copy of UN3373 Biological Substance Category B mark.

• If using a copy, cover entire UN 3373 Biological Substance Category B label with clear tape.

Return Address Label

• Name of person shipping the package, business address, and business phone number.

Shipping

• Ship to the appropriate laboratory listed below.
• Keep records of item(s) shipped, laboratory shipped to, and date of shipment.
• Shipping Papers - A shipper’s Declaration of Dangerous Goods is NOT required.

IDPH Laboratory
P.O. Box 2797
Carbondale, IL 62902
Phone 618-457-5131
Fax 618-457-6995

IDPH Laboratory
2121 W. Taylor St.
Chicago, IL 60612-7260
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