

Suspicious Packages/Material for the Investigation of Agents of Bioterrorism: Guidelines for Submission

*Public Health Laboratories
Public Health Ontario*

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Suspicious Packages/Material for the Investigation of Agents of Bioterrorism:

Guidelines for Submission

The decision to test a sample for agents of bioterrorism is made by the police in consultation with the local Health Unit. All suspicious packages presenting a bioterrorism threat are also treated as legal specimens. Since these materials may become part of a criminal trial a complete record of the chain of custody is required.

PROCESS

1) Sample Collection

- Prior to submission of any sample, contact Public Health Ontario (PHO) Public Health Laboratory Bioresponse Team.
 - **Business Hours: 416-235-6012 (toll-free 1-866-998-0901).**
 - **After Hours number: 416-524-0414.**
 - 24-hour alternate contact number: 416-458-9271
- Ensure collection and packaging complies with the Public Health Requisition for Submitting Environmental Samples for Laboratory Testing. (see PHL Test Requisition for Submitting Environmental Samples Form)

2) Transportation

- Suspicious packages are transported to the Public Health Laboratory by the Law Enforcement Agency or their delegate. The Law Enforcement Agency or delegate maintains chain of custody (COC) during transport.
- Suspicious packages must be submitted to the Security Desk.

3) Sample Receipt

During normal business hours (8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday)

- The Bioresponse Team (BT) member will receive the package and examine it to determine that it is properly packaged (see procedure for packaging) and a specimen submission requisition form (F-C-BT-002) has been completed.
- The submitter and the BT member will complete and sign the sample submission label and affix it to the back of the specimen submission requisition form.
- The BT member will sign the submitter's form to acknowledge receipt of the package.

Non-business hours, weekends and holidays.

- The security guard will receive the package and ensure that a specimen submission requisition form has been completed.
- The submitter and the security guard will complete and sign the sample submission label and affix it to the back of the specimen submission requisition form.
- The security guard will sign the submitters form to acknowledge receipt of the package.

Protocol for Submitting Environmental Samples for Laboratory Testing

Packaging Material Needed

- Three zip lock bags per specimen
- Duct Tape
- Red permanent marker
- Chain of Custody Form

Procedure for Packaging

- Place the suspected environmental material in the zip lock bag and seal completely
- Place the zip lock-sealed envelope in a 2nd zip lock bag and seal completely
- Place the double sealed zip lock in a 3rd zip lock bag and seal completely
- Label the outer zip lock bag: BIOHAZARD
- Place the triple bagged sample into the airtight container and seal container firmly
- Rinse outer bag with 1% bleach. Let it sit for 10 minutes before rinsing
- Label the outer bag: BIOHAZARD
- Complete the chain of custody form and place it around the container with a rubber band
- Tape test requisition form to the outside bag – DO NOT USE STAPLES

Sample Size/Number

- A single sample per incident is adequate
- A minimal amount of material is necessary – no more than a few grams; in the case of a letter or envelope, package the whole item

Responsibility for Transport

- Local law enforcement is responsible for arranging for specimen transport.

Sample Submission Label

Attach to the back of the PHL Test Requisition for Submitting Environmental Samples Form

Submitted by: _____ (Print Name)
Signature: _____
Date: _____ Time: _____ yyyy/mm/dd
Received by: _____ (Print Name)
Signature: _____
Secured in _____
Date: _____ Time: _____ yyyy/mm/dd