

MEMO SECURITY

November 21, 2022 – Biological Risks During a Site Visit



Did you know?

What is a biological hazard?

A biological hazard involves activity that may expose workers to biological agents. A biological agent is defined in Article R. 4421-2 of the Labor Code as a microorganism, genetically modified or not, cell cultures, or human endoparasites likely to cause infection, allergy, or toxicity¹. Live animals, animal carcasses, or human or animal body fluid may pose biological risks.

Biological agents can be classified into four groups:

Nature of the risk	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Causes disease	No	Yes	Severe	Severe
Constitutes a danger	-	Yes	Serious	Serious
Community Transmission	-	Unlikely	Possible	High risk
Treatment available	-	Yes	Yes	No



General Preventive Measures

Every facility manages the groups differently according to legislated requirements; therefore, each site visit requires different approaches to preventive measures. This memo is not an exhaustive list of the protective requirements for each of the above groups, and if interaction or exposure to a biological agent is unavoidable, here are some basic prevention measures that can be used²:

- Wear a gown that covers your clothing and one that preferably has a solid front and closes on the backside
- Footwear appropriate to the facility setting
- Single-use nitrile gloves
- Safety glasses or goggles applicable to the task at hand
- A surgical face mask that protects from large droplets, splashes, or spays of bodily fluids
- A face shield if there is a risk of splash hazards
- N95 mask to filter small particle aerosols

Disinfect yourself once PPE is removed to ensure that the risk of cross-contamination is eliminated. Facilities with biological hazards must have several stations for employees to use for cleaning and disinfecting. Hand washing remains the best method of prevention and should last at least 30 seconds and include these steps:

1. Wet your hands
2. Use liquid soap or disinfectant
3. Allow the soap or disinfectant to foam and then rub hands together. Wash between your fingers, under your nails, and the top of your hand
4. Rinse your hands
5. Dry your hands
6. Turn the tap off with paper towel

Warning

It should be noted that pregnant women are frequently prohibited from visiting a site containing one or more biological agents. It is again necessary to refer to the applicable law, regulations, and policies.

Symptoms and Consequences of Exposure

Symptoms usually appeared within 12 to 72 hours of exposure and in most cases requires hospitalization. The most common symptoms include fever, fatigue, nausea, chill, cramping, and headache. In the most extreme cases, exposure can lead to death.

¹ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000018530510

² Microbe Online. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used in the laboratory. June 26, 2022. Retrieved from <https://microbeonline.com/personal-protective-equipment-ppe/>

