

University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual	EH&S Guideline Number: 03-017	
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SPECIMEN TRANSPORT BETWEEN RESEARCH FACILITIES

1. Scope

These guidelines are to be implemented by University faculty and staff when transporting research samples and specimens between Pitt research facilities and laboratories. Regulated specimens such as Select Agents, Infectious Substance Category A materials, and BSL-3 pathogens require specific approval from Environmental Health and Safety (at a minimum). Contact Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) at 412-624-9505 for additional guidance regarding the proper transport of regulated materials.

2. Purpose

These procedures ensure that all containers containing diagnostic, investigational and research specimens arrive at the intended destination intact without breakage or leakage. Diagnostic, investigational and research specimens must be transported in a package which will prevent leakage.

3. Procedures for Specimen Transport

- 3.1. Place the specimen in a leak-proof primary receptacle. Means of ensuring a leak-proof seal include heated seals, skirted stoppers, or metal crimp seals. If screw caps, snap-on lids, or stoppers are used, they must be secured with adhesive tape, paraffin sealing tape, or a manufactured locking closure. Petri and tissue culture dishes may be used as a primary receptacle, provided they are sealed with a tight-fitting lid and parafilm to minimize leakage, evaporation and/or dehydration.
- 3.2. All potentially infectious materials must be labeled with the universal biohazard symbol. The label should be placed on the primary receptacle.
- 3.3. The primary receptacle should be placed in a leak-proof secondary receptacle. Examples of leak-proof secondary receptacles include shatterproof containers or plastic bottles with screw caps, sealed coolers, or a water-tight sealed bag carried in a rigid container.
- 3.4. Absorbent materials (paper towels, absorbent pads) should be placed between the primary and secondary receptacle in sufficient quantity to absorb the contents of the primary receptacle.
- 3.5. An itemized list identifying the contents of the primary receptacle(s) must be enclosed in a plastic bag and placed between the primary and secondary receptacle.
- 3.6. On the outside of the secondary receptacle place the name and telephone number of the individual responsible for the shipment.

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- 3.7. Receptacles must be opaque so that the sample material is not immediately recognizable. The use of an opaque secondary receptacle that makes the actual specimen obscured and not visible is recommended.
- 3.8. A person responsible for the specimen must accompany the shipment at all times while in transport.
- 3.9. Specimens must be transported between floors using a freight elevator. Passenger elevators may not be used for transport.
- 3.10. Personal protective equipment including gloves and laboratory coats are not necessary to transport properly packaged specimens and must not be worn outside of the laboratory.
- 3.11. Special arrangements can be made with University Parking and Transportation Services for shipments being sent to various campus locations. Contact EH&S for specific procedures.

Please contact EH&S with any questions related to specimen preparation and transportation at 412-624-9505.