



**Universität
Zürich** ^{UZH}

Safety, Security and Environment

University of Zurich
Safety, Security and Environment
Winterthurerstrasse 190
CH-8057 Zurich
Telefon +41 44 635 44 10
Telefax +41 44 635 54 96
www.su.uzh.ch

Biosafety Concept in Accordance with CO and SAMV for Level 1 and 2 Laboratories at University of Zurich (UZH)

Valid for: ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS OF UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH

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Explanatory notes on the Biosafety Concept of the University of Zurich

General situation and objectives

For activities with pathogenic and/or genetically modified organisms, the risk to persons, animals and the environment can never be entirely excluded. Consequently, facilities which work with such organisms are subject to CO¹ and SAMV² regulations. Based on these ordinances, the UZH has drawn up an operational safety concept, which uniformly regulates the key elements of biological safety at the University of Zurich. The institutes and clinics are, however, obligated to draft a further-reaching safety concept, which contains supplements, modifications and details specific to the particular organizational unit (OU).

Structure and use

The following document is divided into two parts:

Part 1 describes the core document, the purpose of which is to uniformly regulate and document the universally applicable safety aspects at UZH.

Part 2 (Chapter 8) contains a list of updated, generally applicable and binding appendices, fact sheets, checklists and SOPs, which are made available to the organizational units (OU) and are managed by the Department of Safety, Security and Environment.

You will find various aids in this document. For example, selectable links are highlighted in blue and links between the appendices mentioned in the core document and the appendices themselves have been built in. Additionally, by clicking on the appendix title you can jump directly back to the core document.

Author and credits:

UZH Department of Safety, Security and Environment in cooperation with Dr. M. Gesemann, former BSO at the Brain Research Institute.

¹ Einschliessungsverordnung (ESV) = Swiss Ordinance on the Contained Use of Organisms (CO)

² Verordnung über den Schutz der Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmer vor Gefährdung durch Mikroorganismen (SAMV) = Ordinance on Occupational Safety in Biotechnology



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1. Scope of the university safety concept

The university safety concept has been drawn up by the UZH Department of Safety, Security and Environment. It is based on the template document *Safety Concept according to CO and SAMV for Level 2 Laboratories*, and developed further from previous documents issued by the Department of Safety, Security and Environment as well as the company KÜNG-Biotech (University of Zurich SiKo_V9). The university biosafety concept establishes the binding framework for implementation of legal requirements, which must be adhered to when working with pathogenic or genetically modified organisms in closed systems (level 1 and 2).³ Integrated in the biosafety concept are occupational safety measures as well as measures to ensure the safety of people, animals and the environment. For Level 3 laboratories and higher, more extensive safety concepts are to be created in consultation with the Department of Safety, Security and Environment and the respective authorities.

The university biosafety concept in the following was created in January 2012 and is periodically revised to reflect the newest legal requirements and the most recent findings pertaining to biological safety. New developments in biological safety including up-to-date fact sheets and checklists can be found on the website of the Department of Safety, Security and Environment <http://www.su.uzh.ch/de/activities/bio/doku.html>, and downloaded from there.

2. Safety objectives

At the University of Zurich work may be performed with hazardous chemical, radioactive and biological substances, for which the risk to people, animals and the environment cannot be entirely excluded. The University of Zurich takes the necessary safety precautions to protect people, animals and the environment from the negative effects of such work and substances and thus exercises its responsibility for the occupational safety and health protection of its staff.

3. Safety organization at UZH

The Department of Safety, Security and Environment is the contact point for all centrally organized operational safety matters. Among the main duties of this department are advising, training and supporting university staff members in regard to occupational safety, hygiene and health, biological safety, fire protection, chemical safety, special waste management, radiation protection, transport/shipping of hazardous goods and environmental protection. The currently assigned responsibilities within the Department of Safety, Security and Environment can be found in the organization chart ([Appendix Organigram](#)).

The **Management/Board of the Organizational Unit (OU)** has operational responsibility for the safety of persons and the environment including workplace safety. It ensures the implementation and adherence to the university safety concept and defines the required organizational structure. Depending on the level of experience, at least one person each is assigned to supervise chemical safety, biological safety and radiation protection. Their status, duties and competences are set out in the job specifications of the University of Zurich (job specifications for **Biosafety Officer (FS BSO)**; **Chemical Safety Officer (FS CSO)**; **Radiation Safety Officer (FS RSO)**). These job specifications also provide information on the duties, tasks and competences of **Lab** and/or **Project Managers** and regulate the responsibilities under normal conditions and in case of an accident. Supplements and

³ An operation in which pathogenic or genetically modified organisms are worked with falls under the jurisdiction of the Containment Ordinance ([CO](#), SR 814.912) and the Ordinance on Occupational Safety in Biotechnology ([SAMV](#), SR 832.321). The scopes of these ordinances supplement one another and serve to protect the environment, the general population as well as the health of individual employees.



amendments to this job specification are noted in the specific biosafety concept of the OU. The status of the Biosafety Officer (BSO⁴) and other safety officials within the organizational unit is documented in the organigram. The OU makes the necessary financial and personnel resources available in order to maintain the biological and chemical safety and provide radiation protection.

Generally speaking, the University of Zurich and the head of the respective OU are liable to third parties. However, they can take recourse to **employees**, who willfully or negligently violate the safety regulations or who have failed to intervene where it would have been necessary and where it would have been possible according to their competences.

4. Emergency response: Planning and incident management

4.1. Telephone numbers in case of emergency and contacts for safety issues

Important phone numbers in case of emergency and the addresses of contact persons for issues concerning safety are posted at the **First Aid Stations** and in every lab. Address and phone lists of the emergency services and the UZH Department of Safety, Security and Environment are listed below:

Internal & External Emergency Services

<i>For Emergencies</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Where</i>
Fire Paramedics	112 (uni-internal) 044/ 635 41 11 (external)	ServiceCenter Irchel (control center)
Fire Paramedics	118 144	<u>External</u> emergency services
Poisoning Effects of chemicals	0145 044/ 251 51 51	Toxicological Information Center

UZH Department of Safety, Security and Environment (as of August 2019)

<i>Area of responsibility</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Contact person & Email</i>
Biology	044/ 635 49 28	Frank, Jörg <i>j.frank@su.uzh.ch</i> Hofmann, Annette <i>a.hofmann@su.uzh.ch</i>
Chemistry	044/ 635 44 44	Dr. Weber, Christoph <i>c.weber@su.uzh.ch</i>
Radiation	044/ 635 49 28	Frank, Jörg <i>j.frank@su.uzh.ch</i>
Waste / Hazardous goods / Transport	044/ 635 41 15	Brentari, Stefan <i>s.brentari@su.uzh.ch</i>
Fire protection	044/ 635 55 55	Piguet, Gabriel <i>g.piguet@su.uzh.ch</i>
Security	044/ 635 44 08	Zimmermann, René

⁴ BSO = Biosafety Officer



		<i>r.zimmermann@su.uzh.ch</i>
Occupational safety/ Health protection	044/ 635 44 05	Hofmann, Annette <i>a.hofmann@su.uzh.ch</i> Dr. Weber Christoph <i>ch.weber@su.uzh.ch</i>
Occupational medicine	044/635 41 17	Dr. Guckenberger Christine <i>ch.guckenberger@su.uzh.ch</i> Dr. Giovanna Ales <i>g.ales@su.uzh.ch</i>

4.2. Safety documentation for emergency services

To ensure the safe deployment of emergency services in case of fire or other incident, important information is documented in the safety concept specific to the organizational unit. This includes:

- a. Emergency response plan (fire sections; access routes; premises in which work is conducted with organisms; storage areas and quantities of organisms, as well as radioactive isotopes or flammable or explosive chemicals).
- b. Project and organism lists.

4.3. Emergency planning: Procedures for lab incidents and emergency situations

When dealing with organisms, emergency situations of various degrees of severity may occur as a result of an infectious material spill, release of aerosols, injury, fire, explosion and water discharge.

4.3.1. General rules of conduct in case of an accident

As a rule, the instructions on escape routes, fire extinguishers and manual alarm buttons, which are posted in lab facilities and other locations, must be observed.

4.3.2. Minor accidents and emergency situations

For minor accidents or emergency situations, responses should always follow the same pattern and in a linear sequence.

1. Leave the danger zone → 2. Alert → 3. Secure → 4. Take action

Minor accident	Emergency situation
1. Get an overview (keep calm)	1. Leave the danger zone (keep calm)
2. Inform BSO	2. Alert emergency services
3. Isolate the contaminated area	3. Secure & rescue
4. Disinfect and/or decontaminate	4. First response, extinguish fire, etc.

4.3.3. Emergency planning

For emergency planning, we differentiate between various emergency situations as the required responses will vary accordingly.

[Emergency info sheet A. Spills of infectious or genetically modified organisms \(contamination\)](#)



[limited to the inside of the lab](#)

[Emergency info sheet B. Water with spread of organisms](#)

[Emergency info sheet C. Injuries](#)

[Emergency info sheet D. Fire / Explosion](#)

[Emergency info sheet E. Incident involving chemicals \(“Chemical accident”, e.g. spills, leaks\)](#)

[Emergency info sheet F. Incident involving radioactive substances \(“radiation accident”\)](#)

4.4. Reporting a lab incident

Should an incident in class 2 lab activities occur, the exact circumstances that led to a contamination of the body and/or an injury – even a minor one – must be recorded. All lab incidents are reported to the BSO and the supervisor. A report form for lab incidents is available from the Department of Safety, Security and Environment ([FS Lab Incident Report](#)). Prepared forms can be found in all level 2 labs and, if necessary, also obtained from the BSO.

The lab incident report helps the BSO to determine the cause of the incident and to undertake measures to minimize and prevent risks. A copy of the completed form also goes to the Occupational Medicine section of the Department of Safety, Security and Environment. The forms are kept on file by the BSO and the supervisor for at least 5 years.

4.5. Medical records

For staff who require an occupational health examination because of their work a medical record is kept.

The following information is contained in this medical record (according to Art. 14 Para. 3 SAMV):

- Reasons for the special occupational protective health measures (e.g. vaccinations)
- Examinations to check the employee’s immune status
- Vaccinations performed
- Medical exam results following accidents and incidents or other exposure to microorganisms and if there is reasonable suspicion of an infectious disease contracted on the job

Attention: The medical record is either maintained by the attending physician as a separate dossier or included as an integral part/file in a previous medical history if the examined person, for example consults the same physician privately. The form and structure of the medical record is left to the discretion of the attending physician⁵. If other occupational health exams are performed at the same time (e.g. radiation protection), then these are filed together in the same personal dossier.

5. Risk assessment

5.1. Reporting obligation

The risks of an activity and the obligation to report or obtain authorization according to [CO](#) (Art. 8-10) and [SAMV](#) (Art. 5 and 6) are established at an early stage. Project leaders thus report to the BSO

⁵ The consulted physician does not necessarily have to be an occupational health professional, but may according to SAMV also be a company doctor or independent medical examiner. It is, however, essential that this person is aware of the work situation and conditions so that a connection to the workplace may be established when making a health assessment and so that occupational health measures may be prescribed accordingly.



before starting an activity all new activities, significant changes (for example the use of new organisms with vastly different characteristics) or significant new findings on safety-relevant aspects of an ongoing activity. The BSO assesses whether a new notification or a supplement to an existing notification is required and submits it on the Ecogen online portal of the federal government (www.ecogen.ch/). When an activity is finished, the responsible persons (BSO as well as group and project leaders) ensure that the project status is adjusted accordingly on the Ecogen platform.

5.2. Project list and inventory of biological agents

The BSO maintains an overview of the activities and organisms used within his/her OU and compiles them in a project list. The project list is updated (new organisms, new employees, etc.) for new notifications and authorizations as well as for relevant changes in the project.

6. Safety measures and code of conduct

6.1. Biological safety

Lab safety rules and operating instructions (Standard Operating Procedures, SOPs)

UZH staff abide by the legally binding “**Principles of good microbiological practice**” according to Appendix 3 SAMV ([FS PRINCIPLES OF GOOD MICROBIOLOGICAL PRACTICE](#)).

To prevent the hazardous formation of aerosols when centrifuging and the spread of organisms, rotors with aerosol-tight covers are used, wherever possible. In class 2 labs, aerosol-tight covers are used exclusively.

Because the biosafety cabinet is of particular importance for the protection of persons and the environment and also for research and test results, details on the **correct handling and use of the biosafety cabinets as well as their periodic maintenance** are listed in a separate fact sheet ([FS BIOSAFETY CABINET](#)).

To prevent infectious diseases whose pathogens can be transmitted by blood or other body fluids, special safety precautions ([FS BLOOD-BORNE INFECTIOUS DISEASES](#)) apply when handling such samples.

Further **specific** aspects on occupational and environmental safety are defined in the instruction manuals, work regulations or the so-called Standard Operating Procedures (**SOPs**) particular to the organizational unit.

6.2. Safety regulations in animal-keeping

When keeping animals, animal welfare law and guidelines which are relevant for the well-being of the animals and the quality of the laboratory animal facility must be observed. Questions pertaining to correct animal-keeping and the ethical aspects and necessity of keeping animals are discussed with the Animal Welfare Officer of UZH (see www.tierschutz.uzh.ch). Projects with genetically modified animals (transgenic & knockout animals) are subject to the Containment Ordinance and are reported to the federal biosafety authority.

For animal transport:

Pathogen-free, genetically modified animals are transported, according to animal welfare provisions, in secure, escape-proof cages or carriers. The cages or carriers are clearly marked (recipient, sender and “Live Animals” notice) and the type and number of animals are also indicated. Conveyed animals are counted before and after transport and any discrepancies clarified immediately.



Attention: Genetically modified animals may not be used as feed material; they can, however, be disposed of at a normal carcasses collection point (see ["UZH Guidelines on Treatment and Disposal of Waste"](#)).

6.3. Safety regulations in growth rooms and glasshouses

(only for plant molecular biology laboratories)

Details on this topic may be found in the appendices of CO and SAMV.

6.4. Transport of organisms or potentially infectious biological agents

For the transport of organisms or potentially infectious biological agents, internal and external, the legal requirements are observed and the corresponding national and international transport guidelines⁶ concerning identification and packaging are followed. Detailed information on the current transport guidelines can be found in the fact sheet [FS TRANSPORT OF ORGANISMS](#).

Unaltered microorganisms in group 1 may be sent by regular mail in all countries, i.e. without special marking. The content should be declared on the customs form as "Harmless biological material" with "No commercial value".

Details on sent and received samples are listed in a datasheet "Transport and shipment of samples".

6.5. Disposal of biologically contaminated waste

The correct disposal of contaminated waste is a key task in order to minimize or prevent the release of organisms from a lab, thus avoiding risks to human life and the environment. The disposal methods for biologically active waste are detailed in the ["Guidelines on the Treatment and Disposal of Waste at the University of Zurich"](#). Further information on handling biological waste can be found in the publications [Disposal of Medical Waste](#) (Bafu) and Waste Disposal in Medical-Microbiological Diagnostic Laboratories (Bafu).

As a general rule:

Open containers and small bags (up to max. 2 liters) can be stored temporarily (2-3 days) in the biosafety cabinet. Waste from class 2 laboratories must be disposed of at least weekly and the sealed biohazard plastic pouches are stored temporarily in a lockable container. Full containers are brought directly to autoclaving and the material is **immediately** and without further interim storage deactivated. The autoclave is loaded and operated by qualified personnel and maintained according to the maintenance schedule. Operation of the autoclave is documented in an instruction manual, placed by the autoclave. After deactivation, autoclaved materials are indicated as such (indicators) and the biohazard marking is obscured (e.g. second casing).

6.6. Chemical safety

To ensure safe handling of chemicals, employees follow the university guidelines and information provided by the Department of Safety, Security and Environment. The Chemical Safety Officer of the OU is the first contact point for matters concerning chemical safety. The CSO's rights and obligations are set out in the job specification for the chemical safety officer ([FS CSO](#)).

⁶ International transport guidelines: „UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations“.



6.6.1 Storage / Quantities

Chemicals are stored in the laboratory only in the quantities required for experimental needs. Highly flammable liquids are kept in suitable and clearly identifiable cupboards or on cupboard shelves. For chemicals marking, storage and transport employees adhere to the guidelines in the factsheets MC2 - MC4. Employees are familiar with the content of the respective safety datasheets and the necessary safety measures are implemented accordingly. The guidelines regarding the storage of chemicals put out by the Federal Coordination Commission for Occupational Safety FCOS (Guidelines 1871, 1825 and 6501) are observed.

6.6.2. Disposal

Chemical waste, strong acids and bases as well as (chlorinated) organic solvents are collected according to the applicable FCOS guidelines and disposed of as required by the Ordinance on the Movement of Waste ([VeVA](#)). The collection and disposal methods are described in the "[Guidelines for the Treatment and Disposal of Waste at the University of Zurich](#)".

6.7. Radiation protection – working with ionizing radiation

To ensure safe handling of radioactive isotopes, the staff of the OU follow the university guidelines and information provided by the Department of Safety, Security and Environment. The Radiation Safety Officer of the OU is the first contact for matters concerning the handling of radioactive isotopes. The RSO's rights and obligations are set out in the job specification for the radiation safety officer ([FS RSO](#)). Working with ionizing radiation or handling isotopes is regulated in separate manuals and work instructions and is based on the applicable regulations⁷ and recommendations of the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) expert course.

6.8. Purchase, service and maintenance of equipment

The machines and devices employed must correspond with the applicable safety regulations. When purchasing new equipment it is therefore essential that a declaration of conformity and an instruction manual is also supplied. The respective documents are filed in a separate folder.

Safety-relevant, technical installations are periodically serviced so that the quality of the research or diagnostic results, and also the safety of staff and in general the protection of human life and the environment is warranted. Maintenance schedules for individual devices are laid down in writing, as are the responsibilities.

6.9. Maternity protection

Because certain chemicals, radioactive isotopes and microorganisms can be hazardous to health and/or teratogenic, it is ensured that expecting and nursing mothers are not exposed to these hazardous substances. In such cases, the university fact sheet and checklist on maternity protection must be observed ([FS MATERNITY PROTECTION](#)).

6.10. Employee directory

Employees who work with group 2 microorganisms or higher or who could potentially come into contact with such organisms are listed in an employee directory. In addition to the employees' names,

⁷ Radiation Protection Act ([StSG](#), SR 814.50), Radiation Protection Ordinance ([StSV](#), SR 814.501) and Regulations Concerning Protective Measures for the Handling of Open Radioactive Sources ([VuarStg](#), SR 814.554)



the list also contains:

- ⇒ Type and classification of the organisms used;
- ⇒ Accidents and incidents with class 2 microorganisms or higher (see Medical Record and Reporting Lab Incidents).

6.11. Access control and identification of level 2 work areas

Based on the Containment Ordinance (CO), access to level 2 work areas is restricted to authorized personnel and is organized as described in 6.11.1 & 6.11.2.

6.11.1. Access authorization rules

- ⇒ Access authorization to level 2 labs is restricted to persons who have been instructed by the Biosafety Officer or lab manager on the applicable safety precautions.
- ⇒ Cleaning staff is only granted access to level 2 labs after receiving work safety instructions from the lab responsible (see 6.12.2 & FS Special Cleaning of Labs).
- ⇒ Visitors may only enter and work in level 2 labs after obtaining permission from the lab manager or the Biosafety Officer and after being made aware of the existing potential risks. All visits must be recorded in a guestbook.
- ⇒ Staff must be instructed on precautionary protective measures, especially for cleaning and service work as well as repairs in a level 2 lab.
- ⇒ In case of an incident, access authorization is extended to generally permit access to the SSE head officer on duty and the SSE emergency officer on duty accompanied by the BSO to all level 2 labs.

6.11.2. Technical implementation

- ⇒ Level 2 labs are equipped with a clearly visible warning sign “Biohazard” ([FS BIOHAZARD WARNING SIGN](#)) in the entrance area, as well as a list of names of the responsible lab managers.
- ⇒ The locking concept should enable quick and safe access for emergency services in case of an incident (e.g. fire). The escape routes are secured.
- ⇒ Lab doors are equipped, if possible, with a self-locking mechanism and an electronic lock. The labs are locked when not in use.
- ⇒ The names and dates of external service and repair personnel or visitors to level 2 labs are recorded on a log sheet.

6.12. Lab cleaning instructions

6.12.1. Disinfection and cleaning – Hygiene plan

To increase the work safety of persons and to minimize the release of organisms to the environment, a hygiene plan is made. For optimal use of cleaning materials and disinfectants, such factors as the range of efficacy, concentrations and exposure time are decisive. Only disinfectants that are effective against the organisms to be deactivated may be used; the manufacturer’s guidelines must be observed. Environmental protection and occupational safety aspects are taken into account whenever possible in the selection of the disinfectant. Instructions for use, safety datasheets and the specific regulations of the products used are compiled in a folder and placed in the respective lab.



6.12.2. Safety regulations for cleaning services

The safety regulations to be considered in level 2 lab cleaning are listed in the fact sheets [FS SAFETY IN LAB CLEANING](#) and [FS SPECIAL CLEANING](#) and UZH cleaning staff is instructed accordingly. Special safety precautions must be observed when handling waste which may contain pathogens of infectious diseases transmitted through blood or other body fluids (see Chapter 6.1. & [FS BLOOD-BORNE INFECTIOUS DISEASES](#)).

6.13. Planning, building, conversion, dismantling and relocation

Among the safety officer's duties are submitting applications for modifications to safety measures according to state-of-the-art knowledge and technology. For new buildings or conversions as well as technical modifications on safety-relevant installations, the responsible safety officer is always consulted.

When converting, repurposing, dismantling and relocating premises, special safety measures, especially decontamination of the lab and the technical equipment, are taken at the appropriate time. If, despite prior decontamination, a risk posed by organisms cannot be entirely excluded, this aspect is explicitly regulated in incident management for the respective construction phase with an increased risk (e.g. removing filters, etc.).

The handover report ([FS PREMISES HANDOVER REPORT](#)) must be filled out completely for any moving or relocation of premises at UZH.

7. Training and further education

The UZH regularly organizes training courses in which the safety officers are instructed in new safety-relevant topics. Group and project leaders as well as staff and students are informed on a regular basis by the safety officers and/or group leaders about the rules of conduct to ensure occupational and environmental safety and trained in the work-related handling of biological material. This training takes place at least once a year and the dates as well as the topics and participating persons are listed in a training datasheet.



8. Appendices, fact sheets, emergency info sheets and checklists

- Organigram of Department of Safety, Security and Environment
- FS B1 BSO (Job specification of Biosafety Officer)
- FS C1 CSO (Job specification of Chemical Safety Officer)
- FS A1 RSO (Job specification of Radiation Safety Officer)
- Emergency info sheet A: Biocontamination in the Lab
- Emergency info sheet B: Biocontamination of Water
- Emergency info sheet C: Injuries
- Emergency info sheet D: Fire/Explosion
- Emergency info sheet E: Chemical Accident
- Emergency info sheet F: Radiation Accident
- FS 11 Lab Incident Report
- FS 12 Ground rules
- FS 13 Biosafety Cabinet
- FS 14 Blood-borne Infectious Diseases
- FS 8 Transport and dispatch of samples
- FS 15 Maternity Protection
- FS Special Cleaning
- FS Biohazard Warning Signs
- FS Safety in Lab Cleaning
- FS Premises Handover Report
- FS B9b Transport of infected animals