

Department: General Pathology	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHSFT	Review Interval: Every 2 years
Author: Jenny Webster	Approved by: Jenny Webster	

Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Road to, or between, hospital sites.

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Title: Packing of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Road to or between Hospital sites.	
User Ref: HSPOL 007	Issue No. 2.10
Page 1 of 6	Issue Date: 27.03.19

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AMENDMENT HISTORY

Amendment		Amendment detail <i>(Include page numbers and/or section headings where the changes have occurred)</i>
Issue No.	Date	
		For amendment details prior to 2016, please see previous versions.
2.0	22.12.16	Update to include use of red transport boxes. Removal of historical memos.
2.1	27.03.19	Removal references not required. Remaining reference now refers to documents held on the departmental QMS software. Amendment of the 'Classification of specimens' document, to align with the wording in the reference document. Addition of Potential Sources of variation.

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Principle

The packaging of pathological specimens for diagnostic or investigational purposes are subject to regulation primarily through The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the UK Carriage of Dangerous Goods Regulations (CDG) and the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the correct packaging and transportation of diagnostic and investigational specimens to and between the Pathology Departments at Cheltenham General and Gloucestershire Royal Hospitals.

Principal Stakeholders

All Healthcare employees involved in the handling, despatch and transportation of diagnostic specimens must ensure that they are packaged according to the guidance provided, and that they are aware of the correct procedures in event of leakage/breakage of the samples in transit.

Information on the correct packaging of samples has been distributed to GP Surgeries, Community Hospitals, Hospital Drivers etc. Pathology Drivers have been trained and have written instructions relating to leaking/broken samples in their Standard Operating Procedure Manual.

Copies of memos circulated are available in archived versions of this policy.

Classification of specimens

For the purposes of transport, infectious substances are classified as either Category A or Category B:

Category A is a pathogen which is transported by any mode in a form that, when exposure to it occurs, is capable of causing permanent disability, life-threatening or fatal disease to humans or animals.

Category B is an infectious substance that does not meet the criteria for inclusion in Category A, and must be transported as UN3373.

This procedure deals with **Category B** samples and how they should be packaged for transport by road to and between hospital sites, to comply with packing instruction 650 (see reference document). Samples being sent to the hospital are all presumed to be Category B. Clinicians suspecting an illness caused by a Category A virus, should be in contact with the microbiology laboratory and specific transport arrangements can be discussed. Microbiology document MIPOL 009 contains further detail.

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UN3373 BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B

Packaging standard – applies to all samples

Potentially infectious substances should be packed according to Packaging Instruction 650 ADR.

1. Every pathological specimen must be enclosed in a primary leak-proof container (E.g. screw-cap universal container, Greiner blood bottle etc) and hermetically sealed or securely closed.
2. Ensure that all sample vials/bottles are labelled in accordance with the laboratory labelling policy with patient's name, DOB or hospital number and laboratory number
3. The primary container must be sealed in a leak-proof plastic bag (Minigrip, polythene or specimen bag with the request card attached to the outside), or in the case of blood samples may be 'batched' into the red transport boxes containing absorbent material.
4. Single or Multiple samples must then be sealed in a plastic bag containing sufficient absorbent material to absorb the entire contents of any liquids (not necessary where red transport boxes are in use).
5. The entire package will be placed inside a secure, padded carrier inside a further heavy-duty plastic bag containing absorbent material and secured at the neck with a clip before transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans.
6. Larger samples (24 hour urines, Histology buckets etc.) should be sealed inside a leak-proof plastic bag, with the request card attached to the outside, and then further sealed individually, inside a heavy-duty plastic bag containing an absorbent pad or other absorbent material.

Labelling

1. The plastic Transport bags will be marked 'Gloucestershire Hospitals NHSF Trust, with contact details for the relevant department, the 'Biohazard' logo and any relevant Chemical Hazard warning signs. The lettering on bag will be colour coded to identify the samples they contain:

Red- Transfusion and Ante Natal samples.

Green- Haematology/Chemical Pathology combined samples

Blue- Microbiology

Black- Histology

Yellow- Cytology

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Where the samples are too large to go into the pre-printed bags (e.g. Large Histology buckets), clear bags may be used and their destination marked in indelible marker on the outside.

- The Carriers will be clearly marked with the Trust's name, the UN3373 mark and the words:

“BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B”

- No other labelling is required.

Sending method

1. Samples packed in accordance with the above procedure may be sent by the Hospital or Pathology Van Service. Where multiple samples are transported in racks, these should be pre-sorted by speciality before racking. The rack and samples should be securely wrapped using 'cling film', and the forms (where applicable) sealed separately in a minigrip bag. The rack and forms should then be placed into the relevant heavy duty plastic bag containing sufficient absorbent material to absorb all liquid in the event of a spillage, ready for transport using the padded carriers.

2. Samples for carriage by Taxi should be packaged according to the standard above, or to the standard for transporting specimens by mail- see separate policy - 'Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Mail'.

3. Urgent samples for Microbiology or Cytology can be packaged up to and including point 4, and then placed in a transport 'pod' with the green (Cytology) or yellow (Microbiology) screw cap which should be made tamper evident with the use of a cable tie through the handle.

4. Packaging of samples for transport by Royal Mail or other Courier are dealt with in a separate policy- 'Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Mail'.

Potential sources of variation

The most likely sources of variation are the procedure not being followed correctly, and therefore risk of spillage, incorrect coloured bags or and inadequate labelling. Transport boxes are printed with UN3373 therefore laboratory staff are always alerted to the Category B content. Manual sorting methods in PAN and departmental receptions will locate any samples in the wrong bags and re-direct them. Routinely, samples are transported in more layers than required by packing instruction 650, to help protect against leaks.

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References

Transporting Infectious Substances.

A guidance document produced by the Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

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