



## **Fact sheet B1**

August 2018

# **Tasks, authority levels and responsibilities for biosafety officers (BSO) in the University of Zurich's academic departments<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. Biosafety: situation and duties of the academic departments**

### **1.1. Tasks, authority levels and responsibilities document for biosafety officers (BSO); resources and organizational position**

Departments that work with microorganisms must appoint a biosafety officer (BSO) and a deputy who are responsible for matters of biological safety and security within that department. The BSO's duties and authority levels are based on the standard profile and are adapted to the specific needs of their department if necessary.

If several BSOs and/or lab and project leaders work in the same department or clinic, their duties and remits need to be clearly delineated.

Department and clinic heads define the financial and human resources required to implement safety precautions. The BSOs should be provided with sufficient resources and time to carry out their tasks.

During normal operations, the BSO is subordinate to the head of the department or clinic. In the event of an incident, the BSO is subordinate to internal and external incident response services (Safety, Security and Environment department, fire department, police, emergency services). The BSO regularly informs the head of the department or clinic about the status of chemical security within the department or clinic.

### **1.2. Prerequisites, requirements and further training**

Biosafety officers shall familiarize themselves with all applicable laws and guidelines – especially the Containment Ordinance (ESV) and the Ordinance on the Protection of Workers from Exposure to Microorganisms (SAMV) – and understand the fundamental concepts of biological safety and security. BSOs understand the rules for handling microorganisms, i.e., they have a relevant university degree or several years of experience in a biolab setting. They know the techniques used within their department and are familiar with the facilities and how the department is organized.

The BSO acts as the contact person for biosafety matters within the department. When it comes to incidents and incident prevention, the BSO works together with the Safety, Security and Environment department, which coordinates these matters throughout the university.

Departments grant their BSO(s) the opportunity to attend internal or external training to deepen their knowledge about biosafety matters relevant to the department.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This fact sheet incorporates the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape's guidelines for biosafety officers (BSO) – status, tasks and authority levels; Publisher: Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape; Bern, 2005  
<http://www.umweltschweiz.ch/buwal/shop/files/pdf/phpOCZFPr.pdf>



### **1.3. Authority levels**

The BSO independently implements directives and resolutions that have been approved by department heads in coordination with the Safety, Security and Environment office. The BSO has the right to obtain all information needed to ensure the biosafety of the department. If necessary, they are granted access to all rooms on the premises that are related to biosafety.

In the event of an incident, the BSO has the authority, on behalf of department heads, to issue direct orders to lab and project leaders as well as the staff in their department, until the arrival of incident response services.

The BSO has the authority for working together directly with incident response services. The heads of the involved incident services are responsible for informing the media.

## **2. Tasks of the biosafety officer**

### **2.1. Normal operations**

The following applies during normal operations:

- The BSO creates an operational biosafety concept in line with the Containment Ordinance (ESV) and ensures that it is updated regularly – specifically the list of current projects and organisms in use – and receives the support of lab and project leaders if needed.
- The BSO provides the department head with the operational safety concept for approval and implementation and submits it to the Safety, Security and Environment office for their records.

The BSO is specifically responsible for the following, either directly or in an overarching sense<sup>2</sup>:

- Ensuring that lab and project leaders are familiar with and adhere to the safety regulations and principles of microbiological practice. The BSO informs the lab and project leaders about the legal requirements and keeps them updated about any changes, ensuring that these requirements are adhered to within the department.
- Ensuring that lab and project leaders fill out permit applications (i.e., registering projects and reporting changes) and submit them to the federal biotechnology office. The BSO offers advice and support on these matters.
- Documenting their area of responsibility for the attention of the authorities (e.g., based on registration and permit documents). This documentation includes the type of activities and organisms and the people exposed to them as well as the names of the relevant lab and project leaders, occupational physicians and workplace security specialists.
- Organizing access regulations so that only people authorized for level 2 areas are granted access. (Additional rules are to be followed for level 3 areas.)
- Establishing correct room designation procedures (access rights, biohazard symbols for level 2 areas etc.) for work involving microbiological material.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The operational safety concept should describe these points in more detail.



- Preparing emergency measures (emergency plan), in alignment with the Safety, Security and Environment office if necessary.
- Overseeing the proper disposal of microbiological waste and issuing instructions for the transport and shipment of biological material.

The BSO supports lab and project leaders with the following tasks:

- Creating, updating and carrying out operational instructions (workplace guidelines, rules of conduct) related to workplace and environmental safety.
- Selecting the appropriate protective equipment and organizing maintenance and washing if needed.
- Coordinating with the cleaning service regarding areas that the teams do not clean themselves.
- Training and issuing instructions to employees regarding the safe handling of biological material (at least once per year) and reporting hazards, incidents and accidents so that appropriate safety measures can be implemented (Article 12, Ordinance on the Protection of Workers from Exposure to Microorganisms (SAMV)).
- Organizing and overseeing health monitoring in accordance with Articles 13 and 14 of the SAMV, specifically:
  - Creating and keeping a project-specific catalog according to Article 13 of the SAMV. This contains information on: the type of activities and organisms in use, number of exposed people, names of people who work with organisms in groups 2-4, accidents and incidents that have occurred.
  - The BSO works with lab and project managers to arrange for occupational physicians to draw up a health file for any employees who have “required occupational health protective measures” (Article 14, SAMV).

## **2.2. In case of an incident**

The BSO performs the following tasks if an incident occurs:

- Cooperating with incident response services to manage the situation.
- Analyzing safety-related incidents together with the biosafety commission and the Safety, Security and Environment office.
- Informing the department head and the Safety, Security and Environment office about any safety-related incidents. The BSO will also inform the UZH Executive Board and the relevant authorities if required.