

Guidelines for Shipping of Infectious Substances with Private Couriers

Background

Exemption of private couriers from Federal packaging and shipping regulations applies only to patient specimens and not to culture isolates.

Definitions

Patient Specimen: Material collected directly from humans and transported for diagnosis or disease treatment or prevention. (Includes excreta, blood, tissue, tissue swabs, culture media without visible growth and blood culture bottles.) Patient specimens do not require any special packaging outside of routine universal precautions.

Culture Isolate: An infectious substance containing a pathogen that is intentionally propagated. (Includes culture media with visible growth.) Culture isolates must be packaged and labeled as Category B (most common) or Category A (rare). Multiple isolates should be bagged separately. It is the shipper's responsibility to properly categorize the isolate.

Packaging Requirements

Category B Infectious Substance

Primary Receptacle ----→ Secondary Packaging ----→ Rigid Outer Packaging

Primary Receptacle = agar plates, agar slants or other leak proof container

Secondary Packaging = leak proof sealed bag with a biohazard marking and absorbent material (if liquid)

Rigid Outer Packaging = cardboard box with a UN3373 label, the designation "Biological Substance, Category B" and the name and telephone number of the shipper

Category A Infectious Substance

Watertight Primary Receptacle ----→ Watertight Secondary Packaging ----→ Rigid Outer Packaging

Primary Receptacle = agar plates, agar slants or other leak proof container (glass, metal or plastic) wrapped in absorbent material (if liquid)

Secondary Packaging = leak proof sealed bag or screw-top leak proof container with a list of contents

Rigid Outer Packaging = cardboard box with an "Infectious Substance Class 6" label, a UN package certification mark and name and telephone number of the shipper

It is the responsibility of the submitting laboratory to determine the appropriate packaging and shipping for patient specimens and culture isolates.