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**Courier Transporting of Laboratory Specimens**

**Purpose**

This document provides instructions on the transport of specimens from outreach sites to the laboratory.

**Formal Policy Statement**:

The Saratoga Hospital Couriers play an important role in the laboratory and in patient care. They are responsible for transporting specimens, supplies and mail from the laboratory to various medical offices, hospital off-sites and collection stations. The couriers become the human face of the Clinical Laboratory. They are the only employee that makes a physical appearance on a daily basis in the clinics and doctors’ offices that we serve. All laboratory employees transporting specimens must adhere to this policy.

**U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Hazardous Materials Regulations:**

The Code of Federal Regulations 49 CFR 171-173 dictates how we package and transport specimens. Patient specimens are classified as Dangerous Goods, Infectious Substances, Class 6**/ Division 6.2**, under the regulations. Class 6 Infectious Substances can either be **Category A** or **Category B.** A proper shipping name and identification number is assigned to each Category. The following definitions apply:

**Division 6.2 (Infectious Substance):** A material known or reasonably expected to contain a pathogen. A pathogen is a micro-organism (including bacteria, viruses, rickettsiae, parasites, fungi) or other agent, such as a proteinaceous infectious particle (prion), that can cause disease in humans or animals.

**Category A:** An infectious substance in a form capable of causing permanent disability or life-threatening or fatal disease in otherwise healthy humans or animals when exposure to it occurs. Proper shipping name and identification number, *Infectious substances, affecting Humans, UN2814***.**

**Category B:** An infectious substance not in a form generally capable of causing permanent disability or life-threatening disease in otherwise health humans or animals when exposure to it occurs. Proper shipping name and identification number; *Biological substance, Category B, UN3373.*

**Materials of Trade Exception, 49 CFR 173.6**

 “are transported by private motor vehicles in direct support of a principle business that is other than transportation by motor vehicle”. Hospitals qualify for this Material of Trade Exception with the following guidelines:

* A material of trade is limited to a division 6.2 material, other than a Category A infectious substance being transported for diagnosis or disease prevention.
* **Patient specimens from physicians’ offices and those transported between facilities for testing fall under Category B and assigned UN3373.**
* Combination packaging must be used, consisting of an inner and outer packaging and follow one of the amounts criteria listed below:
1. One or more inner packaging, each of which may not contain more than 1.1 lbs. or 17 ounces, and an outer packaging containing not more than 8.8lbs, or 1 gallon , or
2. A single inner package containing not more than 35.2 lbs or 4.2 gallons in a single outer packaging.

For the safety of couriers transporting specimens and ensuring the integrity of those specimens the following procedures have been implemented in accordance with Federal and State guidelines.

1. **Courier Transport Logs**
2. Courier is responsible for filling out a Transport Log specific for each route/run. Document the following:
	* Arrival time at customer
	* What is dropped off
	* What is picked up
	* Number of specimen bags picked up
	* Accessioning staff will verify # of bags
3. When picking up specimens at the Patient Service Centers, the courier must sign, date and time on the original log sheet kept at the sites.

**II. Specimen Packaging**

All specimens are collected in a primary container (tube, formalin bottle) and placed in an inner packaging, marked with a biohazard symbol, as mandated by OSHA, (biohazard bag) ready for courier pick up. Do not accept specimens that are not in an inner packaging. Clients are responsible for the proper labeling of patient specimens as described in the Saratoga Hospital Laboratory Service Manual.

 Specimens are placed in an outer packaging (cooler). The outer packaging must:

* contain sufficient absorbent material to absorb the entire contents of the inner packaging
* Be a strong, tight packaging securely closed and secured against shifting, including relative motion between packages, within the vehicle on which it is being transported.

**III. Coolers**

 A**.** Coolers are provided for the safe transport of specimens. They must:

* Have a “Biological Substance Category B, UN3373” sticker.”
* Be lined with a Thermosafe Absorbent Sheet
* Be cleaned daily with a disinfectant wipe. Wear gloves when cleaning and record on the specimen pick-up log.
* Contain a blood spill kit (required by OSHA)
* Close tightly
* Be secured against any movement while in the vehicle.

B. Do not store food or drink in specimen transport coolers.

**IV. STATS**

 If a physician’s office gives you a STAT and you know you will not be back to the laboratory within one hour, you must contact the phlebotomy supervisor or charge person for instructions.

**V. Frozen Specimens**

Frozen specimens will be placed in a separate cooler on a frozen gel pack and delivered to the laboratory immediately.

**VI. Spill or Leakage of Specimens**

A. In case of small spills during transport, immediately begin containment and clean up with appropriate spill kit as follows:

1. Put on disposable gloves, (if applicable; goggles, lab coat and face mask).
2. Contain the spill with the absorbent (RED-Z), surrounding in circular motion from the outside in, completely covering the spill.
3. Once the spill is solidified, immediately pick it up with the shovel and dispose of in red bag.
4. Wipe the pre-cleaned area with the germicidal solution.
5. Dispose all the material including gloves, in the red plastic bag and secure with tie.
6. Discard red bag in an appropriate container for infectious waste.
7. Wipe hands with the antiseptic wipe. Air Dry.
8. Notify laboratory if specimen is compromised.
9. Notify courier supervisor.
10. In the event of a large spill resulting from an auto accident:
11. Call 911
12. Do not touch or walk thru spilled material.
13. Do not touch damaged containers or spilled material unless wearing appropriate protective clothing.
14. Do not clean-up or dispose of, except under supervision of a specialist.
15. Notify laboratory and courier supervisor,
16. Notify the DOT. CFR171.15

As soon as practical but no later than 12 hours after the incident the person in physical possession of the hazardous material must provide notice by telephone to the National Response Center (NRC) either by phone; 800-424-8802 / 202-267-2675 or online at <http://www.nrc.uscg.mil>. Each notice must include the following information:

1. Name of reporter;
2. Name and address of person represented by reporter;
3. Phone number where reporter can be contacted;
4. Date, time and location of incident;
5. The extent of injury, if any;
6. Class or division, proper shipping name, and quantity of hazardous materials involved, if such information is available; and
7. Type of incident and nature of hazardous material involvement and whether a continuing danger to life exists at the scene.
8. The NRC will make the determination if the incident is recordable.

**VII. Training**

Courier Awareness Training is required for employees before they are able to transport laboratory specimens. This includes a Competency / Compliance Test. Certificates are issued for transporting specimens under the Material of Trade Exception 49 CFR 171-173. Recertification is required every 3 years

Couriers must also participate in all other hospital/laboratory mandated training.

**References:**

1. The Code of Federal Regulations 49 CFR 171- 173.
2. High Q, Premier and Consulting Company for the Medical Industry, <http://highqllc.com>
3. Econo Kit Instructions - Medegen Medical Products
4. Transporting Infectious Substances Safely – U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.
5. Laboratory General Checklist – College of American Pathologists

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**Date Placed in Service: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Laboratory Safety Specialist Date Laboratory Medical Director Date**

**Acknowledged by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Laboratory Administrative Director Date Courier Supervisor Date**