

**University of California, Davis**  
**Health System, Sacramento**  
**Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine**  
**SARC Laboratory**

**PRE-ANALYTICAL FORMALIN  
SPECIMEN HANDLING FOR  
HBC, PCN & SARC PERSONNEL**

**Administrative Procedure # 545.H**

**I. PURPOSE**

To establish a uniform process for safely handling patient specimens containing formalin during the pre-analytical transport and receiving steps at HBC, PCN and SARC laboratory sites.

**II. PROCEDURE**

**A. Formalin specimen handling/processing at PCN and HBC laboratory sites:**

1. Upon receiving a specimen in Formalin in the lab via drop-off from the clinic, immediately inspect the container and specimen bag for any evidence of formalin leakage.
2. If there is evidence of leakage (e.g. free liquid outside container in bag), **DO NOT OPEN SPECIMEN BAG.** Only remove accompanying requisition if it is dry and if removal will not cause exposure via opening up specimen bag. Then double bag specimen. Requisition and/or receive specimen into LIS following [policy # 910.A Requisition Entry into LIS](#).
3. Package specimen for transport following [Anatomic Pathology # 10210 Formalin Spill Instructions and Transport of Formalin Specimen Containers](#). Place "Path Specimen" pink flag in outer pocket of courier transport bag so that is visible by SARC personnel upon receiving bag.

**B. Receiving Courier Specimen Bags flagged with "Pathology Specimens"**

1. ALL bags identified as containing Pathology specimens via the "Path" pink specimen flag **MUST BE processed in the ventilated hood in the Send-outs department. DO NOT OPEN "PATH" FLAGGED COURIER BAGS IN SARC SPECIMEN RECEPTION STATION.**
2. Open courier bag in the hood.
  - a. Visually inspect courier bag for spilled liquid/formalin within the courier bag itself. If formalin/fluid is detected, do not remove other specimens from the courier bag. Notify Supervisor and Follow [Anatomic Policy 10210 Formalin Spill Instructions and Transport of Formalin Specimen Containers](#) to clean up spills.
  - b. If the courier bag is dry, then proceed to process individual specimens.

**University of California, Davis**  
**Health System, Sacramento**  
**Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine**  
**SARC Laboratory**

**PRE-ANALYTICAL FORMALIN  
SPECIMEN HANDLING FOR  
HBC, PCN & SARC PERSONNEL**

**Administrative Procedure # 545.H**

---

- c. Visually inspect each specimen for formalin leakage (e.g. free liquid outside container in bag).
  - d. Leave samples with leakage within the specimen bag in the hood for separate handling and processing.
  - e. If the courier bag is dry and there is no liquid outside of specimen bags, samples with no leakage may be removed from the hood and taken back to SARC for receiving.
3. Return all remaining non-leaked formalin specimens and any non-formalin specimens to SARC specimen reception area and receive.
4. Separately, use the Send-outs computer terminal to receive any Pathology/Formalin specimens that have leaked while keeping them within the hood.
  - a. **DO NOT OPEN SPECIMEN BAG** of leaked specimens.
  - b. Remove accompanying requisition if not saturated and if removal does not cause exposure via opening up specimen bag, and then double bag specimen.
  - c. If requisition or barcode is saturated, **DO NOT REMOVE**. Instead, write down the specimen number and patient demographics and receive the sample at the send-outs computer terminal without removing the physical specimen.
  - d. After leaked specimens are received and individually double bagged, route back to SARC specimen "Batch-out" station for routing to the Pathology department.

**NOTE:** Only (1) specimen per double bag for specimens that have leaked.

5. For specimens that require manual requisitioning, leave physical specimen in the hood system and remove the requisition from the specimen bag. Requisition order at the send-outs computer terminal and return label to bag and then route sample to SARC "Batch out" station.

**University of California, Davis  
Health System, Sacramento  
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
SARC Laboratory**

**PRE-ANALYTICAL FORMALIN  
SPECIMEN HANDLING FOR  
HBC, PCN & SARC PERSONNEL**

**Administrative Procedure # 545.H**

---

**III. Exposure or Spill**

- A. For exposure or spills, IMMEDIATELY report to your supervisor or shift lead and refer to Pathology and Laboratory procedures:

**Dept. of Pathology Administrative Procedure 240.A Chemical Safety Plan**

**Dept. of Pathology Anatomic Safety Procedure # 10200 Hazardous Chemicals**

**Dept. of Pathology Anatomic Safety Procedure # 10210 Formalin Spill Instructions**

**Hospital Policies and Procedures # 1725**

**IV. References:**

- UCDHS Department of Pathology Administrative Policy # 240: Chemical Safety Plan
- UCDHS Department of Pathology Administrative Policy # 241: Handling Hazardous Chemicals
- UCDMC Hospital Policies and Procedures # 1725: Response to Hazardous Substance Spills
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
- UCDHS Department of Pathology Anatomic Pathology Policy # 10210: Formalin Spill Instructions and Transport of Formalin Specimen Containers

**University of California, Davis  
Health System, Sacramento  
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
SARC Laboratory**

**PRE-ANALYTICAL FORMALIN  
SPECIMEN HANDLING FOR  
HBC, PCN & SARC PERSONNEL**

**Administrative Procedure # 545.H**

**PROCEDURE HISTORY**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Written Revised By</b>	<b>Revision</b>	<b>Approved Date</b>	<b>Approved By</b>
08/14	D.Brent/T. Cox	new	08/11/14	L.Howell