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Triage and Test Prioritization of Suspicious Environmental Specimens

I. Assess the level of risk

Individuals who report finding suspicious materials should contact public safety officials (fire and/or police) according to local protocols. It is recommended that the responding officials assess the situation and determine the level of risk according to the following categories:

No Apparent Risk

Specimens in this category include powder, particulate matter or liquid found in a likely location with an obvious explanation and no evident threat (i.e. white powder in a coffee shop).

HSLI testing is **not recommended**. These samples can be disposed of in the regular trash.

Low Risk

Specimens in this category include unusual powders, particulate matter or liquid found in a location with no obvious explanation, but no known threat.

Sample submission to the Hinton State Laboratory Institute (HSLI) is **recommended**.

High Risk

Specimens in this category include any substance or object associated with (a) written or verbal **threat**; (b) an unusual event determined by public safety and/or public health officials to be of high risk; and/or (c) occurrence of human illness associated with the situation.

Priority sample submission to HSLI is **required** in these cases.

II. Notification of low and high-risk specimens

1. Call the MA State Public Health Laboratory Bioterrorism (BT) / Chemical Terrorism (CT) 24/7 phone to consult on testing options.
2. Report any suspicious material or specimen known or suspected to contain radioactive material to the state Radiation Control Program's Nuclear Incident Advisory Team (NIAT)
3. Call State Police Bomb Squad if incident is suspected to involve explosives, incendiary devices or if the item is suspected to contain batteries, wires, switches, glass, or metal
4. Local public health officials, Hazardous Materials Teams and FBI should be notified according to local protocols.

5. Notify U.S. Postal Inspectors if suspicious material involves the U.S. mail.

III. Sample collection and transport of low and high-risk specimens

It is recommended that responding trained public safety officials (fire, police, HazMat, according to local protocols) collect the specimen.

1. Collection should involve properly trained and protected personnel. Refer to the *Instructions for Using the BT/CT Specimen Kit* to package the sample. For **Ricin** testing, please collect sample in a PLASTIC container; avoid glass containers.
2. Complete the *Biological/Chemical Threat Specimen Form*. The instructions and form are available at the website .
3. Call the BT/CT 24/7 phone before transporting specimens to HSLI.
4. Transport samples to the HSLI specimen receiving area (front entrance).
Hinton State Laboratory Institute, 305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

IV. Specimen Testing/Results

Low Risk specimens submitted to HSLI:

Monday-Friday 8am-5pm: Testing will begin no later than an hour following receipt.

Evening or weekend hours: Testing will begin on the next business day.

➔ Final results will be mailed to the submitter no earlier than 48 hours.

High Risk specimens submitted to HSLI:

Monday-Friday 8am-5pm: Testing will begin immediately upon receipt.

Evening or weekend hours: Testing will begin immediately upon receipt.

➔ Preliminary test results will be called out to the submitter within 24 hours. Final test results will be called out and mailed to the submitter no earlier than 48 hours.

V. Contact Information

HSLI Bioterrorism/Chemical Terrorism Laboratory 24/7 Phone:

HSLI Epidemiologist On-Call 24/7 Phone:

Nuclear Incident Advisory Team:

State Police Bomb Squad 24/7 Phone: