Factsheet:  
Notification of biosafety relevant activities (biosafety level 1 and 2)

If you work with genetically modified microorganisms (GMO) and/or pathogens (including work with samples from human origin like blood or human tissues), you must notify these activities the Federal authorities of these activities (Ordinance of the contained use of organisms (ESV)). It is forbidden to work at the ETH Zurich with GMO or pathogens without prior notification.

Here is an easy step-by-step guideline on how you should proceed:

1.) identify the biosafety level of your activities:
The microorganisms are classified into 4 different classes (1 “low risk” to 4 “very high risk”), and in most cases this class corresponds directly to the biosafety level (BSL) of your activity, e.g. work with class 1 organisms → in general BSL 1 lab / activity. Working with samples of human origin (blood, tissues) is usually classified as BSL2.

The class of the organisms can be found on several lists, for example:
http://absa.org/riskgroups/index.html
In case you work with samples of human origin, please contact in addition the Ethics Commission of the ETH (http://www.vpf.ethz.ch/about/commissions/EK).

2.) send the notification form to the authorities:
you have to options
a) In writing
   • use the .doc forms at
b) Online
   • register the activity online via the ECOGEN database:
     https://www.ecogen.admin.ch/ecogen/Forms/LogOn/LogOnPage.aspx . To obtain a new ECOGEN account, please contact the Federal Coordination Centre for Biotechnology: contact.biotech@bafu.admin.ch. A short manual on how to use the online portal is available on request from ETH’ SSHE unit .
   • Please send a copy of the notification to the SSHE unit (or at least the registration number).

3.) Declare the responsible persons
For each project a BSO (deputy) and a project leader have to be defined.
   • Send us the names and e-mail addresses of the BSO and his / her deputy. It is strongly recommended that at least one of these 2 people is able to communicate in German.
   • No special training / official formation is required to become a BSO; but BSOs should attend regular trainings. BSO and deputies are added to an ETH internal mailing list (for seminar announcements, biosafety news).
   • ETH offers 1-2 BSO in-house training sessions / seminars / workshops per year (in English and German). There are also courses available at the “curriculum biosafety” http://www.b-safe.ch/?mid=1379&pid=1435, which give a good overview of the legal regulation and practical advice for working under BSL conditions.
• The Project Leader is responsible for the instruction and training of all people working in the biosafety labs.

4.) create a biosafety concept for your group:
• It is mandatory that each group has an own, specific biosafety concept.
• Templates for specific biosafety concepts (both in English and in German) are available on request. The general ETH biosafety concept can be downloaded from the SSHE homepage. Link:

5.) prepare a spill kit:
• Put all material, which can be useful in the event of a spill, in a box. For more information and examples: [http://www.swissbiosafety.ch/fileadmin/Event_2007_Pauli.pdf](http://www.swissbiosafety.ch/fileadmin/Event_2007_Pauli.pdf).
• Train the lab staff how to proceed in the event of a spill.

6.) label your lab(s):
• BSL1 labs: no biohazard signs allowed (not even on the biosafety cabinets). Bins for contaminated waste should have a lid and should be clearly differentiated from “normal” waste (avoid confusion for cleaning staff).
• BSL2 labs: door labels (biohazard warning sign, restricted access sign, names of authorized people in a list), label biohazard waste bins with the biohazard sign, bins should have a lid.

7.) If steps 1 – 6 are successfully processed you are allowed to start working under the following requirements
• For BSL1: Immediately after points 1-6 have been completed
• For BSL2: Wait for 45 days after the notification (but only after points 1-6 have been completed)
• The requirements for working under BSL conditions (infrastructure, construction, working procedures) can be found on a checklist which is available on request from the SSHE unit.

Please note that labcoats are mandatory even in BSL1 labs!

Contact:
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