4TH EDITION

Biological Safety

Principles and Practices

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Contents

Contributors / xi
Preface / xvii

I Hazard Identification

1 Microbial Flora of Humans and Microbial Virulence Factors / 3
   PAUL A. GRANATO

2 Indigenous and Pathogenic Agents of Research Animals / 19
   DIANE O. FLEMING

3 Laboratory, Growth Chamber, and Greenhouse Microbial Safety: Plant Pathogens and Plant-Associated Microorganisms of Significance to Human Health / 35
   ANNE K. VIDAVER, SUE A. TOLIN, AND PATRICIA LAMBRECHT

4 Epidemiology of Laboratory-Associated Infections / 53
   A. LYNN HARDING AND KAREN BRANDT BYERS

II Hazard Assessment

5 Risk Assessment of Biological Hazards / 81
   DIANE O. FLEMING

6 Bacterial Pathogens / 93
   JOSEPH H. COGGIN, JR.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Protozoa and Helminths</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BARBARA L. HERWALDT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mycotic Agents of Human Disease</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WILEY A. SCHELL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Viral Agents of Human Disease: Biosafety Concerns</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JASON PARAGAS AND TIMOTHY P. ENDY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Biosafety for Microorganisms Transmitted Primarily by the Airborne Route</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MICHAEL A. PENTELLA, PAMELA A. KOSTLE, LUCY DesJARDIN, AND MARY J. R. GILCHRIST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cell Lines: Applications and Biosafety</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OTTO DOBLHOFF-DIER AND GLYN STACEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Allergens of Animal and Biological Systems</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WANDA PHIPATANAKUL AND ROBERT A. WOOD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Biological Toxins: Safety and Science</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JOSEPH P. KOZLOVAC AND ROBERT J. HAWLEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III Hazard Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Design of Biomedical Laboratory Facilities</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JONATHAN T. CRANE AND JONATHAN Y. RICHMOND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Primary Barriers and Equipment-Associated Hazards</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELIZABETH A. GILMAN DUANE AND RICHARD C. FINK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Primary Barriers: Biological Safety Cabinets, Fume Hoods, and Glove Boxes</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAVID G. STUART, DAVID C. EAGLESON, AND CHARLES W. QUINT, JR.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Personal Respiratory Protection</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NICOLE VARS McCULLOUGH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Standard (Universal) Precautions for Handling Human Specimens</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEBRA L. HUNT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Prudent Biosafety Practices</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIANE O. FLEMING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Decontamination and Disinfection</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MARTIN S. FAVERO AND MATTHEW J. ARDUINO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Packing and Shipping Biological Materials</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LARRY D. GRAY AND JAMES W. SNYDER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### IV Administrative Controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Biological Safety Program Management</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LOUANN CRAWFORD BURNETT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Biosafety Compliance: a Global Perspective</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RICHARD REBAR AND HALLEY MORIYAMA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Occupational Medicine in a Biomedical Research Setting</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEBORAH E. WILSON AND JAMES M. SCHMITT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Measuring Biosafety Program Effectiveness</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JANET S. PETERSON AND ROBERT J. HASHIMOTO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### V Special Considerations for Biosafety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Biosafety of Prion Diseases</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HENRY BARON AND STANLEY B. PRUSINER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Safety Considerations in the BSL-4 Maximum-Containment Laboratory</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAVID S. BRESSLER AND ROBERT J. HAWLEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Biosafety and Viral Gene Transfer Vectors</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THOMAS A. KOST, PATRICK J. CONDREAY, AND CLAUDIA A. MICKELSON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Biosafety in the Teaching Laboratory</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAVID M. CARLBERG AND MICHAEL R. YEAMAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Biosafety in the Pharmaceutical Industry</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PAUL J. MEECHAN, JOSEPH GYURIS, BRIAN R. PETUCH, MICHEL M. CHARTRAIN, AND WAYNE K. HERBER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Large-Scale Production of Microorganisms</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MARY L. CIPRIANO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Special Considerations for Agriculture Pathogen Biosafety</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ROBERT A. HECKERT AND JOSEPH P. KOZLOVAC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Biosafety and Biosecurity: Regulatory Impact</td>
<td>587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ROBERT J. HAWLEY AND THERESA D. DULEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index / 597
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Preface

This fourth edition of The ASM Book Biosafety: Principles and Practices consists of 33 chapters from over 50 authors with many decades of experience in biological safety. We especially appreciate the additional effort of seven of these authors who also served as Section Editors. Fifteen new authors provide fresh insight on biological toxins, packaging and shipping, biological safety program management, Occupational Medicine in a biomedical research setting, safety considerations in the BSL-4 maximum containment laboratory, and special considerations for agriculture pathogens. All of the other chapters have been appropriately updated. For example, the prion chapter underwent major changes to address the transmission of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease via blood transfusion, which occurred since the previous edition. Of special significance are chapter 4, "Epidemiology of Laboratory-Associated Infections," and chapter 7, "Protozoa and Helminths," both of which contain previously unreported cases and reviews of previous surveys.

Since the third edition of this book, untoward events, such as the anthrax letters in 2002, have had an impact on the field of biosafety and those who work with microbial agents. Regulations have been broadened to prevent terrorists from obtaining certain microbes believed to be useful as biological weapons. These Select Agent regulations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and from the United States Department of Agriculture include stringent requirements to limit those who can obtain, store, or use these agents. Such individuals must undergo a security check, including fingerprinting, and receive a clearance from the Department of Justice. Biosafety personnel now have the additional duty of implementing key biosecurity sections of this regulation. Chapter 33 provides a discussion of the impact of regulations on biosafety and biosecurity.
One of the features of previous editions of this book has been the inclusion of the actual regulation from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) guidelines, and the CDC/NIH guidelines “Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories” (BMBL). Unfortunately, the 5th edition of BMBL is still in press, with no clear date of publication. Since all of the documents are available on the Internet, we refer the reader to those sources instead.

This book is meant to be used as a resource by biosafety professionals, those who teach them, and those who work with pathogenic agents in research, production, or teaching. We have included what is known to be important today. However, biotechnology breakthroughs, such as nanotechnology and synthetic genomics, can be expected to challenge our ability to do appropriate risk assessments in the future. In the six years since the previous edition, poliovirus was synthesized by using a map of the genome which was published in the literature. The synthesis of any virus from its genetic map has become a reality. Will our efforts to recognize and assess the potentially unrecognizable hazards that could arise from combining pieces of many synthesized viruses allow us to continue to find effective methods of containment? Such challenges require that we continuously strive to share information gathered in the broad scope of biological research. We hope this book will aid in this endeavor.

Diane O. Fleming
Debra L. Hunt
Index

AAV (adeno-associated viruses)
- as gene transfer vector, 517, 523
- in pharmaceutical production, 552
A-B toxins, 14
Academic laboratories, see Teaching laboratories
Acanthamoeba, 128
Accidental release, for pharmaceutical production, 557
Accidents, see also Incidents; Needlesticks
- behavioral factors in, 69
- in BSL-4 laboratory, 489
- causes of, 69
- infections associated with, 63, 119, 123
- medical care in, 439–440
- viral exposure in, management after, 201;
  see also specific viruses
Accountability, in biosafety program management, 408
Acholeplasma laidlawii, 226
Acinetobacter, 6
Acoustical considerations, in laboratory design, 288–289
Actinomyces, 9
Actinomyces israelii, 9
Actinomyces naeslundii, 9
Activity-based risk assessment, 86–87
Adeno-associated viruses (AAV)
- as gene transfer vectors, 517, 523
- in pharmaceutical production, 552
Adenoviruses, 197
- clinical manifestations of, 185, 186
- as gene transfer vectors, 515–517, 522
- in pharmaceutical production, 552
Adhesion, as virulence factor, 11–12
Adhesins, as virulence factors, 11–12
Administration, facilities for, in laboratory design, 280–281
Administrative controls, 369–370; see also
  Biosafety programs; Occupational medicine
  compliance issues in, 417–436
Aeromonas, toxin of, 102
Aerosols
- from animal housing, 295–296
- barriers to, 368–369
- bioterrorism agents in, 587
- from centrifuges, 296–297
- containment of, see Biological safety cabinets (BSCs);
  Fume hoods
- creation of, 210, 539
- from fermentors, 298
- HIV in, 346
- laboratory-associated infections due to, 63, 66–67
- from large-scale production, 565
- from mixing equipment, 297–298
- particle size of, 66, 67
- respirators for, 337–338
- safety containers for, 214
- in teaching laboratories, 539
Aflatoxin, 262, 267
African horse sickness virus, 65
African trypanosomiasis (Trypanosoma brucei), 147–150
Agent-based risk assessment, 82–85
Agricultural pathogens, 579–586; see also Plant pathogens
- biosafety levels for, 579–582
- facility for, certification of, 582–584
Agrobacterium, 36
AIDS, see Human immunodeficiency virus infection
Air
- changes per hour, 567
- compressed, 289
- contaminated, respirators for, see Respirators intake systems for, 288
Air conditioning systems, 287–288, 567–568
Airborne allergens, 243–244
Airborne pathogens, 209–220; see also Aerosols
- bacteria as, 215, 217
- biosafety levels for, 210–211, 214–215
- fungi as, 217–219
incident reporting practices for, 212
Mycobacterium tuberculosis as, 210, 212–215, 217
personal protective equipment for, 211–212
regulations on, 215
safety policy for, 210
safety stratification for, 214–215, 216
waste disposal procedures for, 212
Airflow
in biological safety cabinets
Class I, 307–308
Class II, 308–315
in fume hoods, 305
in laboratory design, 287–288
in large-scale production, 566
in protective suits, 494
in surgical masks, 329
Air-line respirators, 325–326
Air-purifying respirators, 326
Alarms
for BSL-4 laboratory, 507
fire, 290
for large-scale production, 569
Allergic reactions, 241–251
allergens causing
environmental distribution of, 243–244
surveillance of, 244–245
types of, 242–243, 443–444
diagnosis of, 242, 245, 247
emergency treatment of, 247
epidemiology of, 443
to laboratory substances, 68
management of, 245–247, 443
pathogenesis of, 241
to plant pathogens, 43
prevalence of, 243
prevention of, 244–247
risk factors for, 241–242, 244
symptoms of, 241–242, 443
Alpha toxin, Staphylococcus aureus, 261
Alphaviruses, 188–189, 517–518
Alternaria, 171
allergic reactions to, 42
in normal microbial flora, 8
plant-associated, 36
Alternaria alternata, 169
Amebiasis (Entamoeba histolytica), 23, 150–151
American Biological Safety Association, 81–82
American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine, animal categories of, 21–23
American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, threshold limit values of, 330
American Hospital Association, sharps injury prevention program of, 349
American Industrial Hygiene Association, fungal handling requirements of, 175
American Institute of Architects, Guidelines for Construction and Equipment of Hospital and Medical Facilities, 278
American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), fume hood test of, 306, 318–319
American trypanosomiasis (Trypanosoma cruzi), 63, 119, 126, 129, 142–147
American Type Culture Collection, 545, 555
Americans with Disabilities Act, 88
Anaerobic bacteria, in normal microbial flora, 9–11
Anaphylaxis, in animal allergy, 247
Anchylostoma, 153
Anchylostoma braziliense, 153
Anchylostoma caninum, 153
Anchylostoma duodenale, 15
Anklylospondylosis, see Bacillus anthracis
Antibiotics, resistance to, decontamination and, 379
Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, 590–593
APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), 44, 433, 447–450
Aphthovirus, 188
Apoptosis, due to bacteria, 94
Apprenticeship, for BSL-4 laboratory, 499–500
Approved Codes of Practice (United Kingdom), 430
Aprons, 299–300
Arboviruses, see also specific arboviruses
biosafety levels for, 366
clinical manifestations of, 185
diversity of, 182–183
epidemiology of, 183–184
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 62, 65, 182
Arenaviridae, 194–195, 489
Arenaviruses, as bioterrorism agents, 587
Argentine hemorrhagic fever virus, 186, 195
Arboviruses, as bioterrorism agents, 587
Asahara, Shoko, as bioterrorist, 588
Ascaris lumbricoides, 153
Aspergillus
inhalation of, 539
in normal microbial flora, 8
proteases of, 15
Aspergillus flavus, 169, 262
Aspergillus fumigatus, 169
Aspergillus niger, 169
Aspergillus parasiticus, 169, 262
Aspergillus terreus, 169
 Assigned protection factors, of respirators, 329–330
Asthma, in animal allergy, 242, 247
Astroviruses, 186
Atmosphere-supplying respirators, 325–326
Attenuated strains
risk assessment of, 85
for teaching laboratories, 545
of viruses, 513, 551–552
Audits, of biosafety programs, 446–448, 453–454
Aum Shinrikyo (Aum Supreme Truth) cult, as bioterrorist group, 588
Australia, biosafety regulations of, 82–85, 89, 417–418
Autoclaving
of Bacillus anthracis spores, 378
in BSL-4 laboratory, 503
in BSL-3Ag laboratory, 580
facilities for, 285
of prions, 380, 466
of toxins, 267

Autographa california nuclear polyhedrosis virus, 520–521
Automated equipment, containment enclosures for, 321
Autopsy, in prion diseases, 464
Avian influenza virus, 85, 86, 192–193
Avian leukosis virus, 196

Bacteroides, 9, 10, 11, 101, 105
Bacteroides fragilis, 101
in normal microbial flora, 10
risk assessment of, 84
Bagaza virus, 189
Balantidium coli, 24
Balnuthia mandrillaris, 128
Banzi virus, 189
Barmah Forest virus, 188
Barriers, 69
to ingestion, 368
to inhalation, 368
for percutaneous exposures, 367–368
primary, 280, 295–301, 366–367; see also Biological
safety cabinets (BSCs); Personal protective
equipment; Respirators
animal housing, 295–296
for blenders, 297–298
for centrifuges, 296–297
certification of, 318–319
fermentors, 298
fume hoods, 305–307, 318–321
glove boxes, 315–322
history of, 303–304
for homogenizers, 297–298
location of, 321
for mixing equipment, 297–298
positive-pressure suits, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500,
505–506
selection of, 304–305
for transport containers, 298
use of, 321–322
for vacuum protectors and traps, 298
secondary, 280

Bartonella henselae, 109
airborne transmission of, 217
in laboratory animals, 21, 27
Bartonella quintana, 109, 217
Beauveria nivea, 554
Bedding, for animals, fungi in, 174
Behavioral factors, in laboratory-associated infections, 69
Belgium, biosafety regulations of, 418–419
Benches
for teaching laboratories, 532–534
vertical-flow clean, 315
Beta toxin, Staphylococcus aureus, 261
Bifidobacterium, 10
Bioanalog test, for biological safety cabinets, 319
Bio-clean systems, 317–318
Biofilms, as virulence factors, 12
Biohazard, definition of, 405
Biological Control Act of 1984 (Australia), 418
Biological Defense Program, 433
Biological safety cabinets (BSCs)
in agricultural research laboratory, 581–582
for automated equipment, 321
in bioterrorism response vehicles, 321
for blood-borne pathogens, 351
BSL-3, 333
BSL-4, 333, 503
for cell lines, 228–230
certification of, 318–319, 446, 449, 582
Class I, 305, 307–308, 318–319
Class II, 305, 308–314, 319
gases in, 304–305
history of, 303–304
installation of, 230, 276
laboratory design for, 274
in large-scale production, 565–566
location of, 321
look-alikes of, 315, 319
maintenance of, 230
for molds, 164–165
for mycobacteria, 213–215
risk assessment for, 304–305
in teaching laboratories, 534–535
for toxins, 265–266
work practices for, 321–322
Biological safety officer, 496
Biological toxins, see Toxins
Biological warfare, see Bioterrorism
Biopsy, brain, in prion diseases, 463
Bioreactor bags, in pharmaceutical production, 559
Biosafety, definition of, 531
Biosafety guidelines, see Guidelines
*Bio*sa*fi*ty in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (CDC/NIH), 361, 432
on BSL-4, 490
on BSL-3 reverification, 450–452, 456–457
on laboratory design, 276
on laboratory management, 407, 408
production quantities defined in, 562
provisions of, 434
on respirators, 333
on risk assessment, 83–84
on teaching laboratories, 542
on zoonotic diseases, 23
*Bio*sa*fi*ty in the Laboratory: Prudent Practices for the Handling of Infectious Materials (NRC), 362, 434–435
Biosafety levels, 362–363; see also specific organisms
ABSL-3, 582
for airborne pathogens, 210–211, 214–215, 218
for bacteria, 96–113
BSL-1
for airborne pathogens, 211
description of, 364–365
for plant pathogens, 36, 44
in teaching laboratories, 542
BSL-1LS, 365, 563, 567, 571
BSL-1P, for plant pathogens, 44
BSL-2
for airborne pathogens, 211
for blood-borne pathogens, 346–347
for cell lines, 228–230
description of, 365
in laboratory design, 273, 276, 277
for parasites, 122
for plant pathogens, 44
in teaching laboratories, 542–543
BSL-2LS, 365, 563, 567–568, 572–574
BSL-3
for agriculture, 594
for airborne pathogens, 211
for blood-borne pathogens, 347
decontamination and, 376–377
description of, 365
floor cleaning, 415
in laboratory design, 275, 276, 282–285
in teaching laboratories, 543
BSL-3Ag, 579–582
BSL-3LS, 366, 563, 567–568, 574–577
BSL-3P, for plant pathogens, 44
BSL-4, 487–508
accidents in, 489
agents handled in, 489–490
for airborne pathogens, 211
animals in, 504–505
apprenticeship for, 499–500
autoclaves in, 503
biological safety cabinet for, 488, 492–494, 503, 505
CDC guidelines for, 490
centrifuges in, 504
chemical use in, 503
class III cabinet for, 488, 492–494, 505
communication in, 501–502
decontamination and, 376–377, 507
description of, 366
dunk tanks in, 504
emergency response in, 505–506
equipment maintenance in, 505
gloves for, 497
goals of, 488–489
hazards in, 492
hearing protection for, 495
inside containment envelope procedures in, 501–505
job hazard analysis for, 490, 491
laboratory design for, 274, 275, 277, 506–507
medical evaluation and surveillance in, 497
need for, 487–488
occupational medicine and, 444
outside containment envelope procedures in, 500–501
overview of, 488–492
personnel suitability for, 496–497
positive-pressure suits in, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
risk assessment and risk management for, 490–492
security issues in, 501
sharps handling in, 503
training for, 497–506
waste management in, 505
work practices in, 502
for cell lines, 228–230
criteria for, 90
decontamination and, 376–377
description of, 364–366
for fungi, 165–166, 218
in laboratory design, 273, 276–277, 282–285
for large-scale production, 362–363, 567–568, 571–577
for mycobacteria, 214–215
for pharmaceutical production, see Pharmaceutical industry
for plant pathogens, 36, 42–43
for prions, 380
in teaching laboratories, 542–543
for toxins, 265–266
for viral vectors, 523–525
Biosafety manager, 447
Biosafety manuals, see Manuals
Biosafety programs
academic, 447–448
for bioterrorism deterrence, 590–594
communication in, 409–410
components of, 445–446, 453–454
documentation in, 410–411
evaluation of, 445–457
administrative, 448–449
audits in, 446–448
BSL-2 level, 445, 453–454
BSL-3 level, 446, 450–452
select agent inspection in, 449–450
governmental, 448
hazard identification in, 406–407
hospital, 448
industrial, 448
legal requirements of, 407
management of, 405–415
benefits of, 405
BSL-4 laboratory, 490–492
corrective action in, 412
implementation in, 408–411
ineffective, 405
monitoring in, 411–412
planning in, 406–408
policy for, 406
preventive action in, 412
review in, 412–414
objectives of, 407–408
policy for, 406
for respiratory protection, 331
responsibility assignment in, 408
structure of, 408
for teaching laboratories, 544
training in, 408–409; see also Training
types of, 447–448
Biosafety regulations, see Regulations
Bioterrorism, 587–596
agents used in, 587–590
BSL-4 laboratory for, 487
security for, 501
biological safety cabinets for, 321
decontamination for, 378–379
definition of, 587
history of, 587–590
programs deterring, 590–594
regulatory agencies involved in, 364
for teaching laboratory and, 543–545
Bipolaris, 36, 171
Bird flu virus, 85, 86, 192–193
Bites
arthropod, 262
mosquito, 132–137
rat, 31, 105, 109
sand fly, 129
snake, 263
Black lamps, 541
Blastosomyces dermatitidis, 169–170, 174
airborne, 209, 217
laboratory-associated infections due to, 63
safety measures for, 166, 167
Bleach, see Sodium hypochlorite
Blenders, 297–298, 351
Blood, prion transmission in, 468–474
Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (OSHA), 96–97, 122,
364, 432
adherence to, 445, 453–454
airborne pathogens and, 212
basic requirements of, 348
effectiveness of, 355–356
glove use, 300
gown use, 299
medical care in, 355
as performance standard, 347
for pharmaceutical production, 559
revised (2001), 348
sharps disposal specifications of, 350
training program in, 354–355
Blood-borne pathogens, see also specific pathogens, e.g.,
Human immunodeficiency virus
biosafety levels for, 346–347
decontamination of, 352–353
definition of, 341
medical care related to, 355
risk assessment of, 341–346
Standard precautions for, see Standard (Universal)
Precautions
Bolivian hemorrhagic fever virus, 195
Bordetella, toxin of, 255
Bordetella pertussis
as BSL-2 agent, 542
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 64
vaccine for, 546, 553
Borna virus, 365
Borrelia, 103–104
Borrelia burgdorferi, 104
Borrelia hermsii, 103–104
Borrelia recurrentis, 103–104
Botulism, see Clostridium botulinum
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, 461, 462, 465
cell line contamination and, 226
monitoring for, 478–479
regulations on, 476–478
transmission of, 474–475
Bovine viral diarrhea virus, 189, 225, 227
Boxes, glove, see Glove boxes
Brain
biopsy of, in prion diseases, 463
prions in, see Prions
Brazilian hemorrhagic fever virus, 186
Brill-Zinsser disease (Rickettsia prowazekii), 110, 297
Brucella, 24–25
airborne transmission of, 215, 217
laboratory-associated infections due to, 54, 60, 61, 63,
64, 296
Brucella abortus, 55, 63–64, 105
Brucella canis, 64, 105
Brucella melitensis, 55, 60, 63, 64, 105–106
Brucella suis, 105, 365
BSCs, see Biological safety cabinets (BSCs)
Budget constraints, in laboratory design, 278
Buildings
design of, see Laboratory design
safety codes for, 280
Bunyaviridae, 193–194, 489
Bunyaviruses
as bioterrorism agents, 587
diversity of, 183
in laboratory animals, 29
Bureau of Medical Devices and Radiological Health, 433
Bureau of Veterinary Medicine, 433
Burkholderia, 36, 106
Burkholderia cepacia, 35
Burkholderia mallei, 106
Burkholderia pseudomallei, 106
airborne transmission of, 215, 217
laboratory-associated infections due to, 55, 61
Bussuquara virus, 189
Cabinets, see Biological safety cabinets (BSCs)
Cacipacore virus, 189
Cages
access to, 282
aerosol hazards from, 295–296
Campylobacter coli, 26
Campylobacter enteritidis, 61
Campylobacter fetus, 26
Campylobacter hyointestinalis, 26
Campylobacter jejuni, 26
Canada, biosafety regulations of, 82–85, 89–90, 419–421
index
Chlamydia, laboratory-associated infections due to, 60, 61
Chlamydia pneumoniae, 108–109
Chlamydia psittaci, 108–109
Chlamydomphila abortus, 27
Chlamydomphila pecorum, 27
Chlorine dioxide gas, for decontamination, 377
Cholera, see Vibrio cholerae
Chromoblastomycosis, 170–171
Chronic wasting disease, 461, 462, 465, 479
Cladophialophora bantiana, 166, 171
Classification of Microorganisms (European Union), 421–422
Classrooms, see Teaching laboratories
Clean air fume hood, 315
Cleaning, in large-scale production, 566–567
Clean-in-place system, 566
Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute
parasite standards of, 122
work practice monitoring by, 354–355
Clinical laboratory design, 277–278, 281
Closed processing, in pharmaceutical production, 558–559
Clostridium
abscess from, 101
as BSL-2 agent, 542
in normal microbial flora, 10
Clostridium botulinum
host cell metabolic alterations due to, 94
toxin of, 254, 255, 257, 260, 587, 588
Clostridium difficile, toxin of, 102
Clostridium perfringens, 94, 102, 255
Clostridium tetani
host cell metabolic alterations due to, 94
toxins of, 14, 54, 255, 260
vaccine for, 546, 553
Clothing
changing
in agricultural laboratory, 580
in BSL-4 laboratory, 266
in BSL-3 Ag laboratory, 580
protactive, 299–301, 367
for blood-borne pathogens, 354
for toxins, 266
Coagulopathy, in hemorrhagic fevers, 186
Coats, lab, 299–300
Coccidioides, 174
as BSL-3 agent, 543
epidemiology of, 164
in fomites, 174
safety measures for, 166–167
Coccidioides inimittis, 170
airborne, 209, 217–218
cultures of, 217–218
laboratory-associated infections due to, 63
safety measures for, 166–167
transport of, 167
Coccidioides posadasi, 166, 167, 170
Code of Federal Regulations, 432
Collagenase, as virulence factor, 15
College of American Pathologists, safety policy guidelines of, 210
Colletotrichum, 36
Colon, normal microbial flora of, 10–11
Colonization, 4; see also Microbial flora, normal of newborn infant, 6
as virulence factor, 11–13
Commensal flora, see Microbial flora, normal
Commission of the European Communities
Directorate-General XII for Science, Research and Development, 230
Committee for Human Medicinal Products (European Medicinal Evaluation Agency), prion regulations of, 472–473, 475–477
Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products, prion regulations of, 472
Committee on Hazardous Biological Substances in the Laboratory (NRC), 363–364
Communication
in biosafety programs, 409–410
in BSL-4 laboratory, 501–502
in large-scale production, 569
in occupational medicine programs, 442
system for, design of, 291
Complement, resistance to, 13–14
Comprehensive Guide to Steam Sterilization and Sterility Assurance in Health Care Facilities, 380
Compressed-air systems, 289
Computer system, 291
Cone snail toxin, 263
Conference space, in laboratory design, 280–281
Conotoxins, 263
Consultants, for biosafety program evaluation, 447
Contagious echyma (orf), in laboratory animals, 29–30, 199–200
Containers, for specimen transport, 298
Containment, 69; see also Barriers
of agricultural pathogens, 579–584
of airborne pathogens, 209–220
certification of, 582–583
of fungi, 164–166
laboratory design for, 282–285
levels of, see Biosafety levels
maximum, see Biosafety levels, BSL-4
of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, 213–214
of parasites, 122
physical, 558–559
of plant pathogens, 43–44
primary, see also Barriers, primary
definition of, 304
for large-scale production, 563–566
requirements for, 96–97
secondary, 285
for accidental releases, 557
in large-scale production, 566–569
Containment research laboratories, design of, 276–277
Contamination
of cell lines, 222, 224–227, 235–237
of gloves, 354
of lab coats, 299–300
of pipettes, 369
of surfaces, prevention of, 352–353
with toxins, 265–266
Continuous cell lines, 221, 222, 227–228
Control of Communicable Disease Manual, 23, 84
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 1999 (United Kingdom), 430–431
Controlled Products Regulations (Canada), 420
Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology, 364
Coronaviridae, 189–190
Coronavirus, 185
INDEX

Corridors  
in laboratory design, 281  
in large-scale production, 568

Corynebacterium, saprophytic, 6, 8

Corynebacterium diphtheriae  
laboratory-associated infections due to, 64  
toxin of, 14  
vaccine for, 546, 553

Cost constraints, in laboratory design, 278

Coveralls, 299–300

Cowpox virus, 512–513

Coxiella burnetii  
biosafety levels for, 365  
as BSL-3 agent, 543  
in laboratory animals, 21, 30  
laboratory-associated infections due to, 54, 61, 65, 67, 296  
work clothing contamination by, 300

Coxsackievirus, 66, 67, 185, 188

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, 461, 462  
aposy in, 464  
brain biopsy in, 463  
decontamination protocols for, 379–380  
 familial, 461  
iatrogenic, 468  
management of, 463  
regulations on, 472–474  
 sporadic, 461

Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever virus, 183, 193–194

BSL-4 laboratory for, 489  
clinical manifestations of, 185, 186, 187

Critical systems checklist, for BSL-4 laboratory, 500

Cryogenic liquids, in BSL-4 laboratory, 503

Cryptococcus neoformans  
as BSL-2 agent, 542  
capsule formation by, 13  
in fomites, 174  
in laboratory animals, 174

Cryptosporidium  
canis, 27  
felis, 27

Cryptosporidium parvum, 27, 150

Ctenocephalides canis, 28

Ctenocephalides felis, 28

C-type particles, cell line contamination with, 225

Culture(s)  
airborne pathogens from, 210, 213  
cell, see Cell lines  
disposal of, 353  
fungal, 166, 217–219  
for pharmaceutical production, 556  
removal of, from teaching laboratories, 536  
security for, 557–559  
transport of, 352

Culture media  
cell line contamination with, 226–227  
facilities for, 286

Current good manufacturing practices, 555

Curvularia, 36, 171

Cyclospora cayetanensis, 150–152

Cytogenic analysis, of cell lines, 234  
Cytotoxins, 14

Dangerous goods, shipping of, see Transport and shipping

Dangerous Goods Regulations (IATA), 384, 386, 392–394

De minimus releases, 557

Decontamination, 367  
of agricultural research effluents, 581  
antibiotic resistance and, 379  
of bioterrorism agents, 378–379  
of BSL-4 laboratory, 507  
of Clostridium botulinum toxin, 260  
definition of, 375–376  
laboratory design for, 292  
of laboratory equipment, 353  
of large spaces, 376–377  
in large-scale production, 566–567, 569  
of liquid effluents, 285  
methods for, 375–376  
of prions, 379–380  
of protozoan oocysts, 151  
purpose of, 375  
terminology of, 374–375  
of toxins, 267  
ultraviolet radiation for, 541  
validation of, 379  
of wastes, 353, 569

Dehydration, in BSL-4 laboratory, 505–506

Delta Protection suit, 494

Delta toxin, Staphylococcus aureus, 261

Dematiaceous fungi, 170–171

Dengue viruses, 65, 183, 186, 189

Dental plaque, microflora of, 9

4-Deoxynivalenol, 262

Department of Agriculture, see United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Department of Health and Human Services, Select Agent Program and, see Select Agent Program

Department of Transportation (DOT)  
bioterrorism regulations of, 594  
shipping regulations of, 435  
certification for, 398  
labeling, 392–394  
marking packages, 392–394  
packaging, 385  
refrigerants, 395, 397–398  
training for, 398

Dermacentor variabilis, 28

Dermatophytes, 163, 171, 174  
in laboratory animals, 27  
safe handling of, 175

Design, laboratory, see Laboratory design

Diacetoxyscirpenol, 262

Diagnostic specimens, shipping of, see Transport and shipping

Diarrhea, bacteria causing, 101–102

Dinoflagellates, toxins of, 263

Diphtheria, see Corynebacterium diphtheriae

Disabled persons  
laboratory design for, 280  
legislation on, 88  
in teaching laboratory, 546

Disasters, teaching laboratory preparation for, 536–537

Disease, vs. colonization, 4

Disinfectants  
for Bacillus anthracis spores, 378  
for blood-borne pathogens, 352  
glove damage from, 495  
hand sanitizers, 535
Disinfection
classification of, 375
in large-scale production, 566
in pharmaceutical production, 556–558
principles of, 374–375
Disposal, see Waste handling and disposal
DNA
oncogenic, in cell lines, 222
recombinant, see Recombinant DNA
DNA fingerprinting, of cell lines, 234
DNA viruses, 182–183
DNases, as virulence factors, 15
Documentation
in biosafety program, 410–411
of occupational injury, 439
in occupational medicine programs, 442
for shipping, 394–396
Dogs
allergens of, 243
natural pathogens of, 20
zoonosis associated with, 26
Domestic Mail Manual, 385, 433
Doors
laboratory, 281, 283, 580
for large-scale production, 567
DOT, see Department of Transportation (DOT)
Drainage systems, in laboratory design, 289
Droplet nuclei, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, 212–215
Dry ice, for shipping, 395, 397–398
Ductwork, testing of, 583–584
Dugbe virus, 65
Dunk tanks, for BSL-4 laboratory, 504
Dwarf tapeworm (Hymenolepis nana), 153
Ear, normal microbial flora of, 8
Earthquakes, teaching laboratory preparation for, 536–537
Eastern equine encephalitis virus, 188
as bioterrorism agent, 587
clinical manifestations of, 185
Ebola Reston virus, 490
Ebola virus, 183, 191
biosafety levels for, 366
as bioterrorism agent, 588
BSL-4 laboratory for, 487, 489
clinical manifestations of, 186
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 62
needlestick accident with, 489
Echinococcus, 28, 153
Echinococcus granulosus, 28, 153
Echinococcus multilocularis, 28, 153
Echinococcus oligarthrus, 28, 153
Echinococcus vogeli, 28, 153
Echoviruses, 188
Enterobacter, 6, 36
Enterobacter aerogenes, 84
Enterobacteriaceae, 101–102
as BSL-2 agent, 542
in normal microbial flora, 10, 11
Enterobius vermicularis, 153
Enterococcus, 11, 15
Enterococcus faecalis, 11, 97
Enterococcus faecium, 97
Enterotoxins, 255, 587
Enteroviruses, 188
Entry and exit procedures, for BSL-4 laboratory, 500
env gene
in lentiviruses, 514–515
in retroviruses, 513–514
Environmental factors
in BSL-4 laboratory, 492
in laboratory-associated infections, 69, 373
in large-scale production, 562–563
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 433
National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan of, 593–594
Environmental rooms, 286
Environmental samples, in teaching laboratories, 536
EPA, see Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Epidermophyton, 171
Epstein-Barr virus
cell line contamination with, 225
clinical manifestations of, 185, 186
Equine encephalitis viruses, as bioterrorism agents, 587
Equine infectious anemia virus, 514, 551
Equipment
for allergen control, 245
decontamination of, see Decontamination
disinfection of, 566
grounding of, 185, 188
hazard warnings for, 367
for large-scale production, 563–566
maintenance of, in BSL-4 laboratory, 505
personal protective, see Personal protective equipment
power supply for, 290–291
selection of, 291–292
for support rooms, 285–287
for toxin handling, 265–266
Erwinia, 542
Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae, 28, 110
Escape self-contained breathing apparatuses, 326
Escherichia coli
abscess from, 101
adherence of, 12
biosafety levels for, 365
clinical manifestations of, 101–102
laboratory-associated infections due to, 64
in normal microbial flora, 10, 11
recombinant, in pharmaceutical production, 553
serum-resistant, 14
toxins of, 255, 260
Esophagus, normal microbial flora of, 9
Etiologic agents, definition of, 587
Eubacterium, 10
European Federation Biotechnology group, risk groups of, 224
European Medicinal Evaluation Agency, prion regulations of, 472–473, 475–477
European Union
biosafety regulations of, 82–85, 90, 421–422
prion regulations of, 472–478
European Working Group of Human Gene Transfer and Therapy, 230
Exempt substances, shipping of, 388, 392
Exhaust
from animal facilities, 287–288
from biological safety cabinets
Class I, 307
Class II, 308, 310–315
Class III, 316–317
from culture systems, 564
from fermentors, 298
from fume hoods, 305–306
from large-scale production, 568
Exogenous reservoirs, of microorganisms, 4
Exotoxins, 14–15, 94–96, 255, 257
Exposure, see also specific substances
to allergens, 244
barriers to, see Barriers
to blood-borne pathogens, 341–346, 355
in BSL-4 laboratory, 505
determination of, in risk assessment, 87
to fungi, 175
to HIV, 341–346
to laboratory-associated pathogens, 63–67
routes for, 361
to toxins, 254–255
Extinguishers, fire, 289
Eye
infectious agent contact with, 300–301, 539
normal microbial flora of, 7–8
protection of, 266, 300–301, 366–367
Eyewash fountains, 265, 289, 535
Face, protection of, 266, 300–301, 354
Facepieces, for respirators, 326
Facilities
allergen control in, 245
design of, see Laboratory design; Large-scale production
Facilities Design Standards (USDA), 579
Factories Act, 1955 (Ireland), 426
Fasciola hepatica, 153–154
Fatal familial insomnia, management of, 463
FDA (Food and Drug Administration), 433, 472, 477–478
Feces, normal microbial flora in, 9–10
Federal Aviation Administration, inspections by, 398
Federal Bureau of Investigation
background checks by, 590
terrorism definition of, 587
Federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992 (Canada), 420
Feline coronavirus, 189
Feline immunodeficiency virus, 514
Feline leukemia virus, 196
Feline sarcoma virus, 225
Feline spongiform encephalopathy, 465
Fermentors, 298, 558–559, 564–565
Fever, in viral infections, 185
Filariasis, 153
Filoviridae, 190–191, 489
Filoviruses
as bioterrorism agents, 587
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 65
Filter bonnet, for animal cages, 295
Filters
in biological safety cabinets, 308, 310, 312–315
for culture systems, 564
HEPA, see HEPA filters
in laboratory design, 277, 285, 291
for plant pathogen protection, 43
for respirators, 327–329, 333
in surgical masks, 329
Fire, in teaching laboratories, 541–542
Fire protection, 289–290
First aid, 439
Fit testing, of respirators, 331–332
Flaviviridae, 489
Flaviviruses, 189, 587
Fleas, of laboratory animals, 25, 28
Flooding, teaching laboratory preparation for, 536–537
Floors, 281, 283–284
in agricultural research facility, 581
in BSL-4 laboratory, 506
cleaning of, 415
in large-scale production, 566–567
Flukes, 153–154
Fluorescence antibody test, of cell lines, 234
Foamy virus, 32, 196, 225
Fomites, fungi associated with, 174–175
Fonsecaea pedrosoi, 170–171
Food
prions in, 475
in teaching laboratories, 536, 538
toxins in, 260–261, 262
Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 433, 472, 477–478
Foot-and-mouth-disease virus, 188
Foot-and-mouth-disease virus, 188
Formaldehyde, for decontamination, 377
Foot-and-mouth-disease virus, 188
Foot-and-mouth-disease virus, 188
Fountains, eyewash, 265, 289, 535
Fowler plague virus, 197, 300
France, biosafety regulations of, 422–423
Francisella tularensis, 107–108
airborne transmission of, 215, 217
as bioterrorism agent, 587
as BSL-3 agent, 543
laboratory-associated infections due to, 54, 61, 64, 67
risk assessment of, 85
Fume hoods, 305–307
certification of, 318–319
clean air, 315
continuous-bypass, 305
Gowns, 299–300, 367
for blood-borne pathogens, 354
for toxins, 266
Greenhouses
certification of, 584
construction of, 581
pathogens in, see Plant pathogens
Growth chambers, plant pathogens in, see Plant pathogens
Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (NRC), 281–282, 504
Guidelines
for biohazard handling
Australia, 418
Canada, 420–421
France, 422–423
Germany, 424–426
United Kingdom, 431–432
United States, 434–435
World Health Organization, 435
Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories, see Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (CDC/NIH)
extent of service, 214–215
host-agent-activity triad and, 88
laboratory, CDC, 362–363
for plant pathogen containment, 44
for recombinant DNA, 86, 87, 90, 212, 361–364, 432, 445, 448–449
for safety policy, 210
safety stratification, American Thoracic Society, 214–215
for toxin handling, 594
for waste handling and disposal, 363–364
Guidelines for Assessing the Risk of Exposure to Biological Contaminants in the Workplace (Australia), 418
Guidelines for Construction and Equipment of Hospital and Medical Facilities, 278
Guidelines for Deliberate Release of GMOs (Australia), 418
Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules (NIH), 361–362, 446, 448–449
on Escherichia coli strains, 533
on laboratory management, 407
Guidelines for Small-Scale Genetic Manipulation at Work (Australia), 418
Guidelines for the Safe Transport of Infectious Substances and Diagnostic Specimens (WHO), 435
Guinea pigs, allergens of, 243

Haemophilus influenzae
immunoglobulin A proteases of, 13
iron acquisition mechanisms of, 12
in normal microbial flora, 8
risk assessment of, 84
vaccine for, 546, 553
Hair, normal microbial flora of, 7
Half-mask respirators, 326
Hamsters, prion diseases in, 465
Handwashing, 367
for blood-borne pathogen control, 352
sinks for, 535
Hantaviruses, 183, 193–194
BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
clinical manifestations of, 185, 186
in laboratory animals, 29
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
respirator for, 337
Harris, Larry Wayne, as bioterrorist, 588
Hazard(s)
aerosol, 295–296
assessment of, see Risk assessment
definition of, 405
electrical, 541–542
in teaching laboratories, 531, 540–542
warning signs for, 367
zoonotic, 19–33, 443–444
Hazard groups, European Union, 421–422
Hazardous Materials Information Review Act (Canada), 420
Hazardous Products Act (Canada), 420
Head covering, 300
Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 (United Kingdom), 430–432
Health and Safety Authority (Ireland), 426
Health and Safety Commission (United Kingdom), 430
Health and Safety Executive regulations (United Kingdom), 430–432, 559
Health and Safety (Dangerous Pathogens) Regulations, 1981 (United Kingdom), 430
Health care facilities, evaluation of, 448
Hearing protection, for protective suits, 495
Heat, for toxin inactivation, 267
Heating and air conditioning systems, 287–288, 567–568
Heat-labile toxin, Shigella, 260
Helicobacter, 9
Helicobacter pylori, 102
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
Helmets, 326
Helminths, laboratory-associated infections due to, 117–118, 153–154
Hemorrhagic fever viruses, see also specific viruses
biosafety levels for, 366
as bioterrorism agents, 587
clinical manifestations of, 186
Hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, 183, 194
Hendra virus, 192, 487, 489
HEPA filters
in animal housing, 295–296
in biological safety cabinets
Class I, 307–308
Class II, 308, 310, 312–315
Class III, 492
in BSL-3Ag laboratory, 580–582
certification of, 582
in culture systems, 564
definition of, 303
in laboratory design, 285, 291
in protective suits, 494–495
in respirators, 328–329
Hepacivuses, 189
Hepatitis, in viral infections, 185–186
Hepatitis A virus
clinical manifestations of, 186
laboratory-associated infections due to, 188
vaccine for, 555
Hepatitis B virus, 200–201
baculovirus hybrid of, 521
biosafety levels for, 365
as BSL-2 agent, 542

cell line contamination with, 225

clinical manifestations of, 185, 186

epidemiology of, 342, 356

as gene transfer vectors, 521

incubation period of, 185

laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 62, 201

transmission of, 341–342

vaccine for, 62, 201

Hepatitis C virus, 189

baculovirus hybrid of, 521

as BSL-2 agent, 542

clinical manifestations of, 185, 186

epidemiology of, 342

laboratory-associated infections due to, 62

transmission of, 342

Hepatitis D virus, 186, 201

Hepatitis E virus, 186

Hepatotoxins, 14

Hepatovirus, 188

Herpes simplex viruses, 197–198, 518–520, 523

Herpesviridae, 489

Herpesvirus simiae, see B virus

Herpesviruses, 197–198, 518–520

Highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, 85, 86, 192–193

Histoplasma capsulatum, 172, 174

airborne, 209, 217–218

culture of, 217–218

in fomites, 174

in pharmaceutical production, 554

risk assessment of, 86

safety measures for, 166, 167

HIV infection, see Human immunodeficiency virus infection

Hog cholera virus, 189

Homogenizers, 297–298

Hoods

fume, 305–307, 318–321

for head, 326

Hospital disinfectants, 375

Hospital laboratories, evaluation of, 448

Host

agent-activity interactions with, 87–88

normal microbial flora relationship with, 3–5

Host defenses, 3

eye, 7–8

gastrointestinal tract, 8–11

genitourinary tract, 11

laboratory-associated infections and, 68–69

respiratory tract, 8

in risk assessment, 87–88

skin, 6–7

virulence factors evading, 13–14

Human immunodeficiency virus, 196

biosafety regulations for, 83

as BSL-2 agent, 542

cell line contamination with, 225

engineering controls for, 351

as gene transfer vector, 514–515, 522

glove protection from, 353

mucous membrane exposure to, 346

in pharmaceutical production, 552

single exposure to, 345–346

Human immunodeficiency virus infection

clinical manifestations of, 186

epidemiology of, 342–343

laboratory-associated, 62, 65–66, 68, 196, 296

occupational, 341–347

prophylaxis for, 196–197

surveillance data on, 343

transmission of, 342–346

Human papillomavirus, 225

Human Pathogens Importation Regulations

(Canada), 420

Human T-cell leukemia virus, 196

cell line contamination with, 225

clinical manifestations of, 186

Hyaluronidase, as virulence factor, 15

Hydatid disease, 28

Hydrogen peroxide, for decontamination, 377, 378

Hydrolytic enzymes, as virulence factors, 15

Hymenolepis nana, 153

Hypoxia, in BSL-4 laboratory, 505

IATA, see International Air Transport Association (IATA)

ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)

biosafety regulations of, 435

shipping regulations of, 383, 384, 389

Ice, for shipping, 395, 397–398

Iguape virus, 189

Ilhéus virus, 189

Immune function, normal microbial flora and, 5

Immune response, in bacterial infections, 94

Immunodeficiency

conditions causing, 68

laboratory-associated infections in, 68–69

opportunistic infections in, 4

plant pathogens and, 43

in teaching laboratories, 546–547

in viral infections, 186

Immunoglobulin(s), production of, normal microbial flora in, 5

Immunoglobulin A, proteases for, as virulence factors, 13

Improvement of the Safety and Health of Workers at the Workplace (Italy), 427

Inactivation

of alphaviruses, 518

of baculoviruses, 521

of bioterrorism agents, 378–379

in pharmaceutical production, 556–558

of prions, 463, 466

Incidents, reporting of, 212

Incineration, 292

for Bacillus anthracis spores, 378

for toxin inactivation, 267

Indigenous flora, see Microbial flora, normal

Industrial biosafety programs, evaluation of, 448

Infection at Work: Controlling the risks, 2003

(United Kingdom), 431–432

Infections, laboratory-associated, see Laboratory-associated infections

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus, 225

Infectious dose, of viruses, 184

Infectious substances

safety audit of, 446

shipping of, see Transport and shipping

Influenza viruses, 192–193

clinical manifestations of, 185

as gene transfer vectors, 521

laboratory-associated infections due to, 62, 65, 193

risk assessment of, 85, 86
Information management system, 291
Ingestion, 14
  barriers to, 368
  of microorganisms
    stomach microflora and, 9–10
  in teaching laboratories, 538
  of toxins, 14, 254
  of Toxoplasma gondii, 139
Inhalation, see also Airborne pathogens
  barriers to, 368
  of fungal spores, 169–174
  of HIV, 346
  of microorganisms, in teaching laboratories, 539
  protection against, see Respirators
  of ricin, 264
  of toxins, 254
Injuries, see also Needlesticks
  occupational, 439–440
  pathogen transmission in, 540
Inoculating loops, sterilization of, 539
Inspections
  in biosafety program evaluation, 446–452
  Select Agent Program, 449–450
  by shipping regulatory agencies, 398
Institutional Biosafety Committee, 265
Instructors, in teaching laboratories
  biosafety training preparation by, 540
  visibility of, 532–534
International Air Transport Association (IATA), shipping regulations of, 383
  cell lines, 230
  changes of 2005, 383, 399
  classification, 385–398
  dangerous goods list, 391
  Dangerous Goods Regulations, 384, 386, 392–394
  documentation, 394–396
  labeling, 392–394
  marking packages, 392–394
  minimum requirements, 385
  naming substances, 390
  packing instructions, 385–398
  packing materials and methods, 390–392
  training for, 398
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
  biosafety regulations of, 435
  shipping regulations of, 383, 384, 389
International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, 182
International Health Care worker Safety Center, 349
International Organization for Standardization (ISO), biosafety management standards of, 405–414
  Intracellular residence, as virulence factor, 13
  Inventory, of hazardous substances, 406–407
  Iodophor disinfectants, for surfaces, 378
  Ireland, biosafety regulations of, 426–427
  Iron acquisition, as virulence factor, 12
  Island fume hoods, 320
ISO (International Organization for Standardization), biosafety management standards of, 405–414
Isoenzyme analysis, of cell lines, 233
Isolation valves, testing of, 583–584
Isolators, 317–318, 319–320
Isospora belli, 150–152
Italy, biosafety regulations of, 427–428
Ixodes, 104, 128–129
Japanese encephalitis virus, 185, 189
  Job hazard analysis, 87, 264–265, 490, 491
  Joint Committee on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
    inspections by, 448
    safety policy guidelines of, 210
Junin virus, 182, 489
  Kaposi’s associated herpesvirus, 186
  Karshi virus, 189
  Karyology, of cell lines, 234
  KATTAR approach, to root cause analysis, 412
  Keddougou virus, 189
  Keratinocytes, cell lines from, 223
  KI Discus test, for biological safety cabinets, 319
  klebsiella, 6, 36
  Kokobera virus, 189
  Kostov, Vladimir, assassination of, 588
  Koutango virus, 189
  Kuru, 463, 467
  Kyasanur Forest disease virus
    BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
    clinical manifestations of, 186
    laboratory-associated infections due to, 182
  Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines (Canada), 420–421
  Laboratory Biosafety Manual (WHO), 82–85, 89, 435
  Laboratory design, 273–293
    acoustical considerations in, 288–289
    for allergen control, 245
    approach to, 273–275
    barriers in, see Barriers
    basic research, 276, 281
    for BSL-3 laboratory, 282–285
    for BSL-4 laboratory, 502–503, 506–507
    clinical, 277–278, 281
    commissioning in, 292–293
    communications in, 291
    containment research laboratories, 276–277
    cost constraints in, 278
    decontamination and, 292, 376–377
    electrical systems in, 290–291
    equipment in, 291–292
    fire protection in, 289–290
    heating and air conditioning systems in, 287–288
information management in, 291
maintenance issues in, 279
maximum-containment, 277
needs evaluation for, 274
office space in, 280–281
operational issues in, 279
plumbing in, 289
preplanning for, 276–279
questioning about, 275
signage in, 292
small, 278
space validation in, 279
support rooms in, 285–287
sustainable (green) design, 274–275
systems distribution in, 291
teaching, 532–535
time constraints in, 278–279
for toxin handling, 265–266
ventilation, 287–288
vermin control in, 292
visualization of, 275
waste handling and removal in, 292
Laboratory-associated infections, 53–77
aerosols in, 66–67
airborne, 209–220
bacterial, 56–57, 60–61, 63–64, 93–114
causes of, 123
from cell lines, 221–239
definition of, 54
exposure to, 63–67
fungal, 59, 63, 66, 163–178, 217–219
helminthic, 117–118, 153–154
historical accounts of, 54
host factors in, 68–69
incidence of, 67–68
from laboratory animals, 19–33
parasitic, 59, 62–63, 66, 115–161
protozoal, 116–117, 122–152
rickettsial, 57, 61, 65, 110–112
zoonotic, 19, 21, 443–444
Labour Protection Act (Germany), 423
Lactobacillus, 8–11, 542
Lactobacillus casei, 365
LAs, see Laboratory-associated infections
Laminar-flow units, in large-scale production, 566
Lamps, germicidal, 541
Langat virus, 189
Large spaces, decontamination of, 376–377
Large volumes, of microorganisms, 540
airborne transmission of, 210
in centrifuges, 297
Large-scale production, 561–577
agent considerations in, 562
Australian guidelines for, 418
biosafety guidelines for, 570–577
cleaning in, 566
definition of, 561–562
disinfection in, 566
environmental considerations in, 562–563
equipment for, 563–566
fermentation tank for, 298
of gene transfer vectors, 525–526
heating, ventilation, and air conditioning in, 567–568
layout arrangement for, 568–569
maintenance in, 568
in pharmaceutical industry, 555–559
primary containment in, 563–566
process considerations in, 562
recovery in, 565–566
risk assessment of, 86–87
safety measures for, 231–232
secondary containment for, 566–569
security for, 569
surfaces in, 566–567
technology transfer in, 555–556
of toxins, 265
utilities for, 568
waste treatment in, 569
Lassa fever virus, 195
biosafety levels for, 366
BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
clinical manifestations of, 186
Latent infections, herpes simplex virus, 519
Latex gloves, 353
Leaks
from biological safety cabinets, 319
from containment rooms, 582–583
from fume hoods, 318–319
from glove boxes, 316
from shipping containers, 384, 390
Legal requirements, of biosafety programs, 407
Legionella pneumophila, 102, 217
Legislation, see also specific acts
Australia, 417–418
Belgium, 418–419
on bioterrorism, 544, 590–594
Canada, 419–420
European Union, 421–422
Germany, 423–424
ICAO, 435
Ireland, 426–427
Italy, 427–428
Mexico, 428–429
Spain, 429–430
United Kingdom, 430–431
United States, 432–434
Leishmania, 62, 127, 129–132
Leishmania amazonensis, 132
Leishmania braziliensis, 131–132
Leishmania chagasi, 131
Leishmania donovani, 130–131
Leishmania guyanensis, 132
Leishmania mexicana, 132
Leishmania tropica, 132
Lentiviruses
from cell line contamination with, 225
as gene transfer vectors, 514–515, 525
in pharmaceutical production, 551, 552
Leprosy (Mycobacterium leprae), 113, 542
Leptospira, 29
Leptospira canicola, 29
Leptospira hardjo, 29
Leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae, 29
Leptospira interrogans, 104–105
in laboratory animals, 29
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 64
Leptospira pomona, 29
Leptospira sejroe, 29
Lethal dose, of toxins, 255
Lethal factor, Bacillus anthracis, 257
Leukotoxins, 14
Lighting, 275, 290
for BSL-4 laboratory, 507
for large-scale production, 568
Liponyssoides sanguineus, 28
Lipopolysaccharides, 15, 94–96
Liquid nitrogen, in BSL-4 laboratory, 503
Listeria monocytogenes, 109–110
Livestock pathogens, biosafety level for, 579–582
Long terminal repeats, in retroviruses, 513–514
Loops, sterilization of, 539
Louping-ill virus, 182, 189
Low-flow fume hoods, 320
Lyme disease (Borrelia burgdorferi), 104
Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, 194–195
cell line contamination with, 225
clinical manifestations of, 185
in laboratory animals, 21, 29, 195
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 65, 179, 195, 295
Lyssavirus, 185

Machupo virus
biosafety levels for, 366
BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
laboratory-associated infections due to, 65, 182
Mad cow disease, see Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
Maintenance of biological safety cabinets, 230
for large-scale production, 568
Major histocompatibility complex, bacterial superantigen interactions with, 15
Malaria (Plasmodium), 62, 127, 132–137
Malassezia, 6, 168–169
Malta fever, see Brucella
Management, see Biosafety programs, management of
Manometer, for containment room testing, 583
Manuals, 87
BSL-4 laboratory, 497–499
Control of Communicable Disease Manual, 23, 84
Laboratory Biosafety Manual (WHO), 82–85, 89, 435, 537
risk assessment, 87
shipping, 385
Marburg virus, 191
BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
clinical manifestations of, 186
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 62
Marine animal toxins, 263
Marking, of packages, 392–394
Masks, 245, 329
Maximum-containment laboratory, see also Biosafety levels, BSL-4
design of, 277
Mayaro virus, 188
Measles virus, 192
clinical manifestations of, 185
laboratory-associated infections due to, 67
Media, culture, see Culture media
Medical history, preplacement, 438
Medical surveillance, see Surveillance
Medioidosis (Burkholderia pseudomallei), 55, 61, 106
Membrane-disrupting toxins, 14
Mengo encephalomyocarditis virus, 188
Meningococci, see Neisseria meningitidis
Meningoencephalitis, in viral infections, 185
Mexico, biosafety regulations of, 428–429
Mice allergens of, 242–243
lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus in, 195
natural pathogens of, 20–21
prion diseases in, 465
zoonosis associated with, 26
Microbial flora, normal, 3–11
composition of, 4–5
ear, 8
eye, 7–8
functions of, 5
gastrointestinal tract, 8–11
genitourinary tract, 11
host relationship with, 3–5
respiratory tract, 8
skin, 6–7
types of, 3–4
Microbiological aerosol tracer test, for BSCs, 308–309
Micrococcus, 6, 8
Micrococcus luteus, 6, 542
Microorganisms, see also specific microorganisms
indigenous, see Microbial flora, normal
Microscopes, cabinets for, 534
Microsporum, 171
Microsporum audouinii, 171
Microsporum canis, 27, 171
Microsporum gypseum, 171
Minimum lethal dose, of toxins, 255
Mites, of laboratory animals, 25, 28
Mixing equipment, 297–298
Model Regulations, 384
Modules, laboratory, 281
Mokola virus, 65
Molds, see Fungi
Monkeypox virus, 199
as gene transfer vector, 512–513
in laboratory animals, 30
Mosquitos, in Plasmodium transmission, 132–137
Most penetrating particle size, in respirators, 327–328
Motility, as virulence factor, 12–13
Mouse mammary tumor virus, 196
Mouse parainfluenza virus, 192
Mouth, normal microbial flora of, 8–9
Mumps virus, 185, 192
Murine leukemia virus, 196, 513–514, 522
Murine toxin, Yersinia pestis, 261
Murray Valley virus, 189
Mycetoma, 170–171
Mycobacterium
atypical, 6
saprophytic, 8
Mycobacterium avium complex, 32–33
Mycobacterium bovis
biosafety level for, 215
in laboratory animals, 32–33
risk assessment of, 85
Mycobacterium leprae, 113, 542
Mycobacterium smegmatis, 11
Mycobacterium tuberculosis, 112–113
airborne transmission of, 210, 212–215, 217
biosafety levels for, 365  
as BSL-3 agent, 543  
culture of, 213, 217  
drug-resistant, 84, 85  
in laboratory animals, 32–33  
laboratory-associated infections due to, 54–56, 61, 63, 67  
respirator for, 334, 336–338  

*Mycoplasma*, 235  
*Mycoplasma arginini*, 226  
*Mycoplasma fermentans*, 226  
*Mycoplasma hominis*, 11, 226  
*Mycoplasma hyorhinis*, 226  
*Mycoplasma orale*, 226  
Mycotic agents, see Fungi  
Mycotoxins, 169, 261–262  
as bioterrorism agents, 587  
decontamination of, 267  
Myrothecium, toxin of, 262, 587  

*Naegleria fowleri*, 128  
Nairoviruses, 489  
Naranjal virus, 189  
Nares, normal microbial flora of, 8  
Nasopharynx, normal microbial flora of, 8  
National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health (Ireland), 426  
National Center for Drugs and Biologicals, 433  
National Institute for Health and Safety at Work (Spain), 429  
National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 433  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories, see Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (CDC/NIH)  
biosafety regulations of, 83, 90  
contract with, 407  
Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules, 446, 448–449  
laboratory guidelines of, 362–363  
Primary Containment for Biohazards: Selection, Installation and Use of Biological Safety Cabinets, 434  
recombinant guidelines of, 86, 87, 90, 212, 361–363, 432, 448–449  
National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (Australia), 418  
National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, 593–594  
National Research Council (NRC)  
Biosafety in the Laboratory: Prudent Practices for the Handling of Infectious Materials, 362, 434–435  
Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 504  
infectious material handling, 363–364  
recombinant DNA hazard statement of, 364  
Natural disasters, teaching laboratory preparation for, 536–537  
Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act of 2000, 432  
Needlesticks  
in BSL-4 laboratory, 489  
cryptococcosis due to, 168  
disposal methods and, 350  
Ebola virus infection due to, 191  
epidemiology of, 356  
hepatitis B due to, 342  
hepatitis C due to, 189  
herpesvirus infections due to, 197–198  
HIV infection due to, 196  
leishmaniasis due to, 130–132  
malaria due to, 134–136  
prevention of, 347–350, 367–368, 432, 540  
statistics on, 347–348  
in teaching laboratories, 540  
toxoplasmosis due to, 139–141  
trypanosomiasis due to, 143–146, 148–149  

*Neisseria*, 101  
iron acquisition mechanisms of, 12  
saprophytic, 8  
Neisseria gonorrhoeae, 101  
adherence of, 12  
immunoglobulin A proteases of, 13  
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61  
pus formation by, 94  
Neisseria meningitidis, 101  
biosafety levels for, 365  
immunoglobulin A proteases of, 13  
laboratory-associated infections due to, 60, 61, 64  
in normal microbial flora, 8  
vaccine for, 553  
Neurologic disorders, in viral infections, 185  
Neurotoxins, 14, 254, 257, 260, 263  
New Substances Notification Regulations (Canada), 419  
New Zealand, biosafety regulations of, 89  
Newcastle disease virus, 191–192  
Nicotiana tabacum, as model plant, 44  
NIH, see National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
NIOSH, see National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)  
Nipah virus, 192  
BSL-4 laboratory for, 487, 489  
clinical manifestations of, 185  
Nivalenol, 262  
Noise control  
in laboratory design, 288–289  
in protective suits, 495  
Norwalk virus, clinical manifestations of, 186  
Nose, normal microbial flora of, 8  
*Notoedres cati*, 28  
NRC, see National Research Council (NRC)  
Ntaya viruses, 189  
Obligate pathogens, for teaching laboratories, 545  
Occupational exposure limits (OELs), respirators and, 339  
Occupational Health and Safety Act (Canada), 420  
Occupational infections, see Laboratory-associated infections  
Occupational medicine programs, 437–444  
for animal research, 433–435  
for BSL-4 laboratory, 497  
communication in, 442  
goals of, 437  
for injuries and illnesses, 439–440  
for maximum-containment laboratories, 444  
preplacement evaluations in, 437–439  
record keeping in, 442  
skin storage in, 443  
surveillance in, 440–442  
for toxin exposure, 264  
workers’ compensation and, 442
Occupational Safety and Benefit Authority of the Chemical Industry (Germany), 424
Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 364
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
  Bloodborne Pathogen Standard, see Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (OSHA)
  General Respiratory Protection Standard of, 331
  Mycobacterium tuberculosis recommendations of, 337
  personal protective equipment requirements of, 211–212, 299
  record keeping requirements of, 442
  regulations of, 343
  respirator protection factors of, 329–330
  safety policy guidelines of, 210
  Ochroconis gallopavum, safety measures for, 166
  Office space in laboratory design, 280–281
  in large-scale production, 568
  Omsk hemorrhagic fever virus, 189
  BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
  clinical manifestations of, 186
  On the Contained Use of Genetically Modified Microorganisms (European Union), 421
  On the Deliberate Release into the Environment of Genetically Modified Organisms (European Union), 421
  On the Protection of Workers from Risks Related to Exposure to Biological Agents at Work (European Union), 421
  On the Protection of Workers from Risks Related to Exposure to Chemical, Physical and Biological Agents at Work (European Union), 422
  Oncogenic cell lines, 226
  Oncogenic viruses, 225
  Oncoviruses, cell line contamination with, 225
  O'nyong-nyong virus, 185, 188
  Opportunistic pathogens, 4
    plant-associated, 35
    risk assessment of, 88
    for teaching laboratories, 545
  Orf virus, 29–30, 61, 199–200
  Orientia (Rickettsia) tsutsugamushi, 61, 110–111, 217
  Ornithonyssus bacoti, 28
  Ornithosis (Chlamydia psittaci), 108–109
  Orthomyxoviridae, 191–192, 489
  OSHA, see Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
  Overlap select agents and toxins, 166–167, 590, 592
  Packaging
    definition of, 400
    labeling, 392–394
    leakproof, 390
    refrigerants for, 395, 397–398
    requirements for, 385, 390, 392
    Paecilomyces lilacinus, 172
    Pantoea, 36
    Paracoccidioides brasiliensis, 166, 172
    Paraformaldehyde, for decontamination, 377
    Parainfluenza virus, 192
      cell line contamination with, 225
      clinical manifestations of, 185
      Paralysis, in viral infections, 185
      Parvovirus
        clinical manifestations of, 185
        as gene transfer vectors, 521
        laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
    Pasteurella, 108, 255
      Pasteurella haemolytica, 108
      Pasteurella multocida, 30, 108
      Pasteurella pneumotropica, 108
      Pasteurella ureae, 108
      Pathogenicity, definition of, 4
      Pathogens
        blood-borne, see Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (OSHA); Standard (Universal) Precautions
        virulence of, see Virulence; Virulence factors
      Patriot Act of 2001, 268, 544
      PCR (polymerase chain reaction)
        for cell line characterization, 234
        for cell line contamination detection, 235–236
      Penicillium, 8, 539
      Penicillium camemberti, 365
      Penicillium marneffei, 172–173
        laboratory-associated infections due to, 63
        safety measures for, 166
      Peptostreptococcus, 9–11, 100
      Perchloric acid fume hoods, 306
      Personal protective equipment, 298–301, 366–367
        for allergens, 245
        for blood-borne pathogens, 353–354
        positive-pressure suits, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
        respiratory, see Respirators
        standards for, 299
      Personnel reliability program, in Select Agent Program, 592
      Personnel/employees/workers, see also subjects starting with Occupational
        for BSL-4 laboratory, 496–497
        medical surveillance of, for bioterrorism agents, 592–593
        zoonotic hazards for, 19–33, 443–444
      Pest control programs, 292, 569
      Pestiviruses, 189
      Pfiesteria piscidia, toxin of, 263
      Phaeohyphomycosis, 170–171
      Phagocytosis, resistance to, as virulence factor, 13
      Pharmaceutical industry, 551–560
        accidental releases in, 557
        bovine product use in, 475–478
        culture identification in, 556
        disinfection in, 556–557
        head coverings for, 400
        inactivation in, 556–557
        microorganisms used in, 551–555
        regulations in, 559
        scale-up in, 555–559
        security in, 557–559
        shoe coverings for, 400
      Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, on recombinant DNA, 432–433
      Pharmacy glove boxes, 317
    of laboratory animals, 24, 25, 28
    laboratory-associated infections due to, 59, 62–63, 66, 115–161
    Parechovirus, 188
    Parrot fever (Chlamydia psittaci), 108–109
    Particle filtration, in respirators, 327–329
    Parovirus
      clinical manifestations of, 185
      as gene transfer vectors, 521
      laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
    Pasturella, 108, 255
    Pasteurella haemolytica, 108
    Pasteurella multocida, 30, 108
    Pasteurella pneumotropica, 108
    Pasteurella ureae, 108
    Pathogenicity, definition of, 4
    Pathogens
      blood-borne, see Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (OSHA); Standard (Universal) Precautions
      virulence of, see Virulence; Virulence factors
    Patriot Act of 2001, 268, 544
    PCR (polymerase chain reaction)
      for cell line characterization, 234
      for cell line contamination detection, 235–236
    Penicillium, 8, 539
    Penicillium camemberti, 365
    Penicillium marneffei, 172–173
      laboratory-associated infections due to, 63
      safety measures for, 166
    Peptostreptococcus, 9–11, 100
    Perchloric acid fume hoods, 306
    Personal protective equipment, 298–301, 366–367
      for allergens, 245
      for blood-borne pathogens, 353–354
      positive-pressure suits, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
      respiratory, see Respirators
      standards for, 299
    Personnel reliability program, in Select Agent Program, 592
    Personnel/employees/workers, see also subjects starting with Occupational
      for BSL-4 laboratory, 496–497
      medical surveillance of, for bioterrorism agents, 592–593
      zoonotic hazards for, 19–33, 443–444
    Pest control programs, 292, 569
    Pestiviruses, 189
    Pfiesteria piscidia, toxin of, 263
    Phaeohyphomycosis, 170–171
    Phagocytosis, resistance to, as virulence factor, 13
    Pharmaceutical industry, 551–560
      accidental releases in, 557
      bovine product use in, 475–478
      cell line use in, 222
      culture identification in, 556
      disinfection in, 556–557
      head coverings for, 400
      inactivation in, 556–557
      microorganisms used in, 551–555
      regulations in, 559
      scale-up in, 555–559
      security in, 557–559
      shoe coverings for, 400
    Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, on recombinant DNA, 432–433
    Pharmacy glove boxes, 317
Pharynx, normal microbial flora of, 8
Phenolic disinfectants, 378, 466
Phialophora verrucosa, 170–171
Phospholipases, as virulence factors, 14, 15
Physical examination, preplacement, 438
Picornaviridae, 188
Pigs, see Swine
Pili, as virulence factors, 11–12
Pinworm (Enterobius vermicularis), 153
Pipetting, 369
Plague, see Yersinia pestis
Plant pathogens, 35–52
containment of, 43–44
dematiaceous fungi, 170–171
diseases from, 35–43
reemergence of, 35–36
risk assessment of, 36, 42–43
disposal of, 44
transportation of, 44
Plant Protection Act regulations (USDA), 44
Plant toxins, 263–264, 287–288
Plaque, dental, microflora of, 9
Plasmodium, 62, 127, 132–137
Plasmodium cynomolgi, 126, 133, 134
Plasmodium falciparum, 126, 133–137
Plasmodium malariae, 133–137
Plasmodium ovale, 133–137
Plasmodium vivax, 133–137
Plasmodium vivax
Plating efficiency, of cell lines, 233
Plesiomonas shigelloides, 102
Plumbing, 289
Pneumococci, see Streptococcus pneumoniae
Pneumonia, viral, 185
Poison darts, 588
Poisonous substances, from living organisms, see Toxins
pol gene
in lentiviruses, 514–515
in retroviruses, 513–514
Policy
for airborne pathogen safety, 210
for biosafety program management, 406
Poliovirus
clinical manifestations of, 185
as gene transfer vectors, 521
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 188
risk assessment of, 85
vaccines for, 85, 555
Polymerase chain reaction, see PCR
Polysaccharide capsules, as virulence factors, 13
Porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, 189
Positive-pressure suits, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
Postal Service, shipping regulations of, 385, 433
Postexposure management, of virus exposure, 201
Powassan virus, 189
Power supply, 290–291
Powered-air purifying respirators, 326
Poxviridae, 198–200, 489
Poxviruses
clinical manifestations of, 185
as gene transfer vectors, 511–513
in laboratory animals, 30
in pharmaceutical production, 552
Pregnancy
laboratory-associated infections in, 68
precautions in, in teaching laboratory, 546
risk assessment in, 88
vaginal microflora in, 11
Preplacement evaluation, 437–439
Pressure decay test
in agricultural research facility, 581
for containment room, 583
for glove boxes, 316
Pressure relief systems, 564–565
Prevention of Work-Related Risks (Spain), 429
Prevotella, 9
Prevotella melaninigenica, 9
Primary containment, see Barriers, primary;
Containment, primary
Primary Containment for Biowastes: Selection, Installation and Use of Biological Safety Cabinets (CDC/NIH), 434
Primates, nonhuman
herpesviruses in, 197–198
Mycobacterium tuberculosis in, 113
Plasmodium in, 134
poxviruses in, 199–200
retroviruses in, 196
zoonotic hazards of, 19, 21, 26
Prions, 461–485
biosafety of, 380, 463–466, 479–480
in blood products, 467–471
cell line contamination with, 226, 227
decomamination protocols for, 379–380
detection of, 480
diseases of, 461–462
animal, 464–466
autopsy in, 464
biopsy in, 463
epidemiology of, 471–472
experimental, 465
management of, 463
in foodsuffs, 475
inactivation of, 463, 466
laboratory exposure to, 463
molecular nature of, 461–462
monitoring animals for, 478–479
pathogenicity of, 461–462
physical properties of, 463
regulations on, 472–478
transmission of, 380, 462
animal-to-human, 474–479
human-to-human, 467–474
Probability, in significance criteria model, 407
Procedures for Assessment of the Planned Release of Recombinant DNA Organisms (Australia), 418
Process, in large-scale production, 562
Processing
closed, 558–559
downstream, 565
Product protective test, for biological safety cabinets, 319
Prophylaxis, see Vaccines and vaccination
Propionibacterium acnes, in normal microbial flora, 6
Proteases, as virulence factors, 13, 15
Protection factor, of respirators, 329–330
Protection of Laboratory Workers from Occupationally Acquired Infections, 380
Protection of Workers Against Risks Related to the Exposure of Biological Agents in the Workplace (Spain), 429–430
Protection of Workers from the Risks Related to Exposure to Chemical, Physical, and Biological Agents at Work (Italy), 427
Protective antigen, *Bacillus anthracis*, 257
Protective clothing, for toxins, 266
Protective suits, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 505–506
Proteus, 6, 102
Protozoa, see also specific protozoa
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 116–117, 122–152
Providing Minimum Health and Safety Requirements Relating to the Use of Personal Protective Equipment (Spain), 430
PrP genes and proteins, 461, 463, 468–469, 477–480
*Pseudallescheria boydii*, 171
*Pseudomonas*
  as BSL-2 agent, 542
  direct contact with, 539
  in normal microbial flora, 6
  as plant pathogen, 36
*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*
  alginate production by, 94
  in biofilms, 12
  as plant pathogen, 35
  toxin of, 14, 102, 255
*Pseudomonas cepacia*, 61
*Pseudomonas mallei*, 296
Psittacosis (*Chlamydia psittaci*), 108–109
Public Health Services, regulations of, 433
Purification, in large-scale production, 565
Pyrogenic toxin superantigens, 14–15
Q fever, see *Coxiella burnetii*
Quality standards, for cell lines, 237
Quarantine, for cell lines, 229
Rabbits, zoonosis associated with, 26
Rabies virus, 190
  clinical manifestations of, 185
  in laboratory animals, 30–31
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 297
  vaccine for, 555
Racoon pox virus, 66
Radioactive waste disposal, 292
Radioallergosorbent tests, in animal allergy, 242
Radionuclides
  in biological safety cabinets, 304–305
  fume hoods for, 306
Rajneeshee cult, bioterrorist activities of, 588
Ramichloridium obovoideum, 166, 171
Rash, in viral infections, 185
Rat(s)
  allergens of, 242–244
  bites of, 31, 105, 109
  natural pathogens of, 20–21
  zoonosis associated with, 26
Rat-bite fever (*Spirillum minus*), 105
Rat-bite fever (*Streptobacillus moniliformis*), 31, 109
Recirculated fume hoods, 307
Recombinant DNA, see also Gene transfer vectors
  in cell lines, 228
  containment requirements for, 97
  guidelines for, 432
  Australia, 418
  United States, 86, 87, 90, 212, 361–364, 445, 448–449
  in pharmaceutical production, 551–555
  registration of, 267
  risk assessment of, 83, 86–87, 90
  safety audit of, 446
  work practices for, 361–362
Recombinant organisms
  influenza virus, 193
  risk assessment of, 86, 90
Records, in biosafety program, 310
Refrigerants, for shipping, 396–398
Registration, of toxins, 267–268
Regulations, biosafety
  Australia, 82–85, 89, 417–418
  Belgium, 418–419
  Canada, 82–85, 89–90, 419–421
  European Union, 82–85, 90, 421–422
  France, 422–423
  Germany, 423–426
  internet resources on, 435
  Ireland, 426–427
  Italy, 427–428
  Mexico, 428–429
  *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, 215
  pharmaceutical production, 559
  prions, 472–478
  respirator use, 330–332
  shipping, 383–401
  Spain, 429–430
  toxins, 267–268
  United Kingdom, 430–432, 559
  United States, 82–85, 364, 383–401, 432–435, 544, 590–594, see also specific agencies
World Health Organization, 435
Relapsing fevers (*Borrelia*), 103–104
Releases
  minimizing, 565
  in pharmaceutical production, 556–557
  prevention of, 565
Reproductive system, laboratory-associated infections affecting, 68
Requirements for Hazardous Substances, Materials and Wastes (Mexico), 428
Research, animals used in, see Laboratory animals
Research laboratories
  design of, 276–277, 281
  vs. teaching laboratories, 532
Respirators, 325–340, 367
  for aerosolized microorganisms, 337–338
  air-line, 325–326
  air-purifying, 326
  approval of, 330–331
  atmosphere-supplying, 325–326
  for *Bacillus anthracis*, 334
  cartridge change-out schedule for, 333
  fit and fit testing of, 331–332
  gas removal by, 327–329
  for hantavirus, 337
  occupational exposure limits and, 330
  OSHA standard on, 331
  particle filtration by, 327–329
  for plant pathogen protection, 43
  powered air-purified, 283
  program for, 325
  protection factors for, 329–330
  recommendations for, 333, 335–336
  regulations on, 330–332
  Respirator Decision Logic for, 332–333
  for SARS, 334
INDEX  |  617

selection of, 332–338
self-contained breathing apparatuses, 325–326
surgical mask combined with, 329
surgical masks as, 329
types of, 325–326
Respiratory disorders, in viral infections, 185
Respiratory syncytical virus, 185, 196
Respiratory syndrome, 192
Respiratory tract, normal microbial flora of, 8
Responsibility, for biosafety program management, 408
Restriction fragment length polymorphism, of cell lines, 234–235
Retroviridae, 195–197
Retroviruses
  cell line contamination with, 225, 236
  as gene transfer vectors, 513–514, 522, 525
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 62
  in pharmaceutical production, 551, 552
Rhabdoviridae, 190
Rhinoviruses, 185, 188
Rhipicephalus sanguineus, 28
Rhizobium meliloti, 365
Rhizopus, inhalation of, 539
Rhizopus oryzae, 173
Ricin toxin, 263–264, 587, 588
Rickettsia akari, 112
Rickettsia conorii, 61
Rickettsia prowazekii, 110, 297
Rickettsia rickettsii, 94, 111–112
Rickettsia tsutsugamushi, 61, 110–111, 217
Rickettsia typhi, 61
Rickettsiae, 57, 61, 65, 110–112
Rickettsialpox (Rickettsia akari), 112
Rift Valley fever virus, 183
  clinical manifestations of, 186
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 179, 182
Rinderpest virus, 192
Rio Bravo virus, 189
Risk
  acceptability of, 88
  classification of, 89–90
  prioritization of, 88–89
  in significance criteria model, 407
Risk assessment
  acceptability of risk in, 88
  activity-based, 86–87
  agent-activity interaction in, 87
  agent-based, 82–85
  assessor for, 81–82
  biosafety manual and, 87
  of biosafety program, 407
  of blood-borne pathogens, 341–346
  of BSL-4 laboratory, 490–492
  classification criteria in, 89–90
  definition of, 210
  exposure determination in, 87
  of gene transfer vectors
    adeno-associated viruses, 517
    adenovirus, 516–517
    alphavirus, 518
    baculovirus, 520–521
    herpesvirus, 519–520
    lentivirus, 515
    poxvirus, 512–513
    retroviruses, 514
  host factors in, 87–88
  for laboratory design, 280
  of large-scale activities, 86–87
  of mycobacteria, 213–214
  of plant pathogens, 36, 42–43
  of prions, 226
  of recombinants, 86, 90
  risk groups in, 82–85
  risk prioritization in, 88–89
  in scale-up, 86–87
  of unknowns, 85–86
  Risk factors, for allergic reactions, 244
  Risk groups, 82, 89–90
  for cell lines, 224
  France, 422
  Risk management
    in animal handling, 504–505
    for toxins, 264–265
  Risk Management (U.S. Army), 492
  Risk matrix, for viruses, 184–185
  RNA viruses, 182–183
  Rochalimaea (Bartonella) henselae, 21, 27, 109, 217
  Rocky Mountain spotted fever (Rickettsia rickettsii), 94, 111–112
  Rodents
    allergens of, 242–243
    arenaviruses in, 194–195
    control of, 292
    hantavirus transmission from, 193–194
    lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus in, 195
    natural pathogens of, 20–21
    prion diseases in, 465
    rat-bite fever from, 31, 105, 109
    Yersinia pestis in, 106–107
    zoonosis associated with, 26
  Root cause analysis, 412
  Ross River virus, 188
  Rotavirus, 186
  Rotors, centrifuge, 297
  Rubella virus, 185, 188–189
  Rubiviruses, 188–189
  Russian spring-summer encephalitis, 489
  Sabia virus, 195
    BSL-4 laboratory for, 489
    clinical manifestations of, 186
    laboratory-associated infections due to, 65, 296–297
  Saccharomyces cerevisiae
    biosafety levels for, 365
    in pharmaceutical production, 554
  Safe Biotechnology (Germany), 424–426
  Safety and Hygiene Conditions in Workplaces Where Chemical Substances Capable of Causing Contamination of the Work Environment are Produced, Stored or Handled (Mexico), 429
  Safety Conditions for the Prevention of and Protection Against Fires in the Workplace (Mexico), 428
  Safety generalist, 447
  Safety Health and Welfare at Work Regulations, 1993 (Ireland), 426–427
  Safety manuals, see Manuals
  St. Louis encephalitis virus, 185, 189, 365
  Salmonella, 102
    in laboratory animals, 31
    laboratory-associated infections due to, 60, 61, 64
    serum-resistant, 14
Salmonella enterica serovar Enteritidis, 31, 365
Salmonella enterica serovar Typhi, 54, 64, 102
Salmonella enterica serovar Typhimurium, 31, 588
Salmonella paratyphi A, 536

Samples
Ebola virus in, 191
environmental, in teaching laboratories, 536
Sampling devices, for large-scale production, 565
Sanitary drainage, in laboratory design, 289
Sanitizers, hand, 535
Saprophytes, 4
Sarcocystis, 137
Sarcocystis hominis, 137
Sarcocystis suihominis, 137
Sarcoptes scabiei, 28

Sarina, as bioterrorism agent, 588
SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome)-associated virus, 189–190
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61, 65, 190
respirator for, 334
risk assessment of, 85
Sashes, of fume hoods, 305–306
Scabies, 28
Scale-up activities
in pharmaceutical production, 555–559
risk assessment of, 86–87
Scedosporium apiospermum, 171
Scedosporium prolificans, 128
Schedule constraints, in laboratory design, 278–279
Schistosoma, 62
Schistosoma mansoni, 119, 154
Scoleocephalus gallopava, 171
Scrapie, 226, 461–465
Scrub typhus (Rickettsia tsutsugamushi), 61, 110–111, 217
Scrubs, 299–300
SEB toxin, Staphylococcus aureus, 261
Security
bioterrorism and, 590, 592
for BSL-4 laboratory, 501
for large-scale production, 569
systems for, 290–291
for toxins, 268
Select Agent Program
audit of, 446
bioterrorism agents and, 501, 590–593
BSL-4 laboratory and, 501
fungi and, 166–167
inspections of, 449–450
shipping regulations and, 386, 401
toxins and, 267–268
Self-audits, 447
Self-contained breathing apparatuses, 325–326
Semliki Forest virus, 188, 517–518
Sendai virus, 192
Seoul virus, 29
Sepik virus, 189
Serratia, 36
Serratia marcescens, 297–298
Serum resistance, as virulence factor, 13–14
Serum storage, in occupational medicine programs, 443
Service of Biosafety and Biotechnology (Belgium), 419
Severe acute respiratory syndrome-associated virus, see SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome)-associated virus
Sharps, see also Needlesticks
in BSL-4 laboratory, 503–505
disposal of, 350–351, 503
HIV transmission by, 343–344
precautions for, 347–349, 367–368
safety-engineered devices for, 349–350
work practice controls for, 351–353
Sheep
scrapie in, 226, 461–465
zoonosis associated with, 26
Shellfish toxins, 587
Shiga toxin, 14
Shigella, 102
apoptosis due to, 94
in laboratory animals, 31–32
laboratory-associated infections due to, 60, 61, 64
toxin of, 255
Shigella dysenteriae
in laboratory animals, 31–32
toxins of, 255, 260–261
Shigella flexneri
in laboratory animals, 31–32
laboratory-associated infections due to, 300–301
toxins of, 260
Shigella sonnei
in laboratory animals, 31–32
laboratory-associated infections due to, 64
toxins of, 260
Shipper’s Declaration for Dangerous Goods, 383, 394–398
Shipping, see Transport and shipping
Shock, electrical, 542
Shoe coverings, 300
Showers, 289
for BSL-4 laboratory, 496, 500–501
for BSL-3Ag laboratory, 580
for containment facility, 285
for toxin laboratory, 265
Siderophores, as virulence factors, 12
Sight lines, in teaching laboratories, 534
Signage systems, 292
Significance model, 407
Simian foamy virus, 196
in laboratory animals, 32
laboratory-associated infections due to, 62
Simian immunodeficiency virus, 62, 196
Simian type D retrovirus, 62
Simian virus 40, 521, 555
Sindbis virus, 188, 517–518
Sinks
handwashing, 535
for large-scale production, 569
for toxin laboratory, 265
Skin
cell lines from, 223
infectious agent contact with, 539, 540
lesions on, work practices with, 352
normal microbial flora of, 6–7
Sleeping sickness (Trypanosoma brucei), 147–150
Small intestine, normal microbial flora of, 10–11
Smallpox, see Variola virus
Snake venom, 263, 266
Sodium dodecyl sulfate, for prion inactivation, 466
Sodium guanidine isocyanate, for prion inactivation, 466
Sodium hydroxide, for decontamination, 352
Sodium hypochlorite, for decontamination, 352, 376
of prions, 380
INDEX

of surfaces, 378
of toxins, 267
Sonicators, 297–298
Spain, biosafety regulations of, 429–430
Spaulding classification, of germicides, 375
Special Program on Safety Measures in Microbiology (WHO), 537
Specified risk materials, in prion diseases, 477
Specimens, medical
fungi in, 175
laboratory design for, 278
transport of, see Transport and shipping
Spills
of bioterrorism agents, 592
of blood-borne pathogens, 352–353
in BSL-4 laboratory, 503
disinfectants for, 378
in large-scale production, 558
management of, 290, 353, 378
Spirillum minus, 31, 105
Spirochetes, nontreponemal, 104–105
Splatter, control of, 352
Spondweni viruses, 189
Spores, from molds, 169–174
Sporothrix schenckii, 63, 173–174
Sprinkler systems, 290
Spumavirus, 65
Stachybotrys chartarum, 169, 175
Stachybotrys, toxin of, 262, 587
Stainless steel mesh gloves, 353
Standard operating procedures
for pharmaceutical production, 556
for toxins, 265, 266–267
Standard (Universal) Precautions, 341–359; see also Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (OSHA)
effectiveness of, 355–356
engineering controls in, 347–351
for hepatitis viruses, 341–342
for HIV, 342–346
medical care in, 355
monitoring of, 354–355
personal protective equipment for, 353–354
risk assessment and, 341–346
specific, 346–353
testing for, 354–355
work practice controls in, 351–353
worldwide adoption of, 346
Staphylococci, 97
coagulase-negative, 8, 11
direct contact with, 539
laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
in normal microbial flora, 6, 9
toxins of, 15, 102
Staphylococcus albus, 542
Staphylococcus aureus, 97
as BSL-2 agent, 542
tenterotoxins of, 587
in normal microbial flora, 6, 8
risk assessment of, 84
toxins of, 255, 261
vancomycin-resistant, risk assessment of, 85
Staphylococcus auricularis, 6
Staphylococcus capsitis, 6
Staphylococcus epidermidis, 6, 97
Staphylococcus haemolyticus, 6
Staphylococcus hominis, 6
Staphylococcus lugdunensis, 6
Staphylococcus saprophyticus, 97
Staphylococcus warneri, 6
Stem cells, 223–224
Strongyloides fuelleborni, 32
Strongyloides stercoralis, 32, 153
Students, see Teaching laboratories
Suits, positive-pressure, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
Superantigens, bacterial, 14–15
Supervisor, for BSL-4 laboratory, 496–497
Supplied-air (air-line) respirators, 325–326
Supplied-air suit, 298, 326, 333, 494–497, 500, 505–506
Support rooms, for laboratories, 285–287
Support systems, for large-scale production, 568–569
Surfaces
decommissioning of, 352–353, 367, 375, 377–378
in large-scale production, 566–567
for prions, 380
Spaulding classification of, 375
splatter protection for, 352
Surgical masks, 329
Surveillance
in allergic reactions, 244–245
for bioterrorism agents, 592–593
in BSL-4 laboratory, 497
in HIV infection, 343
in occupational medicine programs, 440–442
Sustainable design, for laboratories, 274–275
Swine
natural pathogens of, 21
zoonosis associated with, 26
Swine fever virus, 189

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Swine influenza virus, 65
Systems distribution, in laboratory design, 291

T-2 mycotoxin, 262
Tacaribe complex viruses, 194–195
Tackle box, for blood-borne pathogen transport, 352
Taenia solium, 153
Tanapox virus, 30, 199
Tapeworms, 153–154
TBE virus, 185, 189

Teaching laboratories, 531–549
American Society for Microbiology safety recommendations for, 548
appropriate study materials for, 545–546
biosafety environments in, 542–543
biosecurity program for, 447–448
bioterrorism in, 543–545
definition of, 532
design of, 532–535
hazards in, 531, 540–542
natural disasters and, 536
operation of, 536–537
shared with other classes and courses, 536
special risk students in, 546–547
student safety training in, 537–540, 549
unique nature of, 531

Technical Instructions for the Safe Transportation of Dangerous Goods by Air (ICAO), 384

Telephone system, 291
Tembusu virus, 189
Terrorism, see Bioterrorism
Tetanus, see Clostridium tetani
Tetrodotoxin, 263
Threshold limit values, 330
Tick-borne encephalitis virus, 182, 489
Ticks, 25, 28, 103–104
Time constraints, in laboratory design, 278–279

Tissue cultures, as test systems, 224

Toxoplasma gondii, 137–142
biosafety levels for, 365
intracellular residence of, 13
in laboratory animals, 32
laboratory-associated infections due to, 63, 119, 126, 128, 138–142
in pregnancy, 88

Traffic flow patterns, 282

Training
in biosafety programs, 408–409
for blood-borne pathogens, 354–355
for BSL-4 laboratory, 497–506
evaluation of, 451
resources for, 237
for respirator use, 325
for shipping dangerous goods, 398
for stock culture security, 557
of students, 537–540
for toxin management, 265

Training for Development of Innovative Control Technologies Project, safety-engineered sharp device evaluation form of, 350

Transfusions, prion transmission in, 468–474

Transilluminator lamps, 541

Transmissible mink encephalopathy, 465

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, 226, 379–380

Transmission, see also specific organisms
airborne, see Airborne pathogens
environmentally mediated, 373
to newborn infants, 8
routes for, 361
in teaching laboratories, 538–540
of zoonotic diseases, 21–23, 443–444

Transplantation, cell lines for, 223–224

Transport and shipping, 383–401
agencies governing, 383–385
of bacteria, 97
of bioterrorism agents, 594
of blood-borne pathogens, 352
of cell lines, 230
certification for, 398
definitions used in, 399–400
documentation for, 394–396
of fungi, 167
labeling packages for, 392–394
marking packages for, 392–394
naming substances for, 390
packing for, 390–392
of plant pathogens, 44
refrigerants for, 396–398
regulations on, 84, 383–401, 433
of specimen containers, 298
substance classification for, 385–389
training for, 398

Trauma, see Injuries

Trematodes, 153–154

Trench mouth, 105

Trematodes, 153–154

Trench mouth, 105

Trematodes, 153–154

Trench mouth, 105

Trematodes, 153–154

Trench mouth, 105

Trematodes, 153–154

Treponema pallidum, hydrolytic enzymes of, 15
Treplax isolator, 317

Trichinella spiralis, 153

Trichoderma, toxin of, 262, 587

Trichophyton, 171

Trichophyton mentagrophytes, 27, 171

Trichophyton verrucosum, 27, 171

Trichothecene mycotoxins, 262, 587

Trichuris trichiuris, 153

Trichothecene mycotoxins, 262, 587

Trichuris trichiuris, 153
INDEX

Multiple fume hood, 319
Triple packaging, 390, 392
Trypan blue test, for cell lines, 232, 233
Trypanosoma, 62
Trypanosoma brucei brucei, 149
Trypanosoma brucei gambiense, 147–150
Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense, 147–150
Trypanosoma cruzi, 63, 64, 126, 129, 147–150
Trypanosoma brucei brucei gambiense, 149
Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense, 147–150
Trypanosoma cruzi, 63, 119, 126, 129, 142–147
Tuberculosis, see Mycobacterium tuberculosis
Tularemia, see Francisella tularensis
Tumorigenicity, of cell lines, 237
Typhoid (Salmonella enterica serovar Typhi), 54, 64, 102
Typhus
  endemic (Rickettsia prowazekii), 110, 297
  laboratory-associated, 297
  scrub (Rickettsia tsutsugamushi), 61, 110–111, 217
Uganda S virus, 189
Ulcerative gingivostomatitis, 105
Ultraviolet radiation, 541
Undulant fever, see Brucella
United Kingdom, biosafety regulations of, 430–432, 559
United Nations, see also World Health Organization (WHO)
  International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), 383, 384, 389
United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Biotechnology Information and Advisory Service, 228
United States, biosafety regulations of, 82–85, 432–435
United States Army
  Biological Defense Program of, 433
  Risk Management, 492
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
  Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of, 44, 433, 447–450
  biosafety program inspection by, 447
  Facilities Design Standards, 579
  Plant Protection Act regulations, 44
  Select Agent Program and, see Select Agent Program
United States Department of Transportation, see Department of Transportation
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan of, 593–594
United States Postal Service, shipping regulations of, 385, 433
Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT Act), 268, 544
Universal Precautions, see Standard (Universal) Precautions
University of Reading, teaching resources of, 545
Unkows
  risk assessment, 85–86
  in teaching laboratories, 536
Ureaplasma urealyticum, 11
Urethra, normal microbial flora of, 11
Urinary tract, normal microbial flora of, 11
USDA, see United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Utilities, for large-scale production, 568
Vaccination of Laboratory Workers Handling Vaccinia and Related Poxviruses Infectious for Humans (United Kingdom), 431
Vaccines and vaccination
  Bacillus anthracis, 103
  Borrelia burgdorferi, 103
  for BSL-4 laboratory agents, 492, 497
  cell lines for, 221, 222
  Clostridium botulinum, 260
  Francisella tularensis, 108
  fungi, 175
  hepatitis A virus, 188
  hepatitis B virus, 62, 201
  influenza virus, 193
  manufacture of, laboratory-associated infections due to, 61
  Mycobacterium tuberculosis, 112–113
  orf, 200
  for pharmaceutical production workers, 556
  poliovirus, 85
  preplacement, 438–439
  production of, 551–555
  rabies virus, 190
  ricin, 264
  rubella virus, 189
  for teaching laboratory occupants, 546
  toxins, 264
  variola virus, 199–200, 511–512
  Yersinia pestis, 107
Vaccinia virus, 199–200
  attenuation of, 513
  as gene transfer vector, 511–513
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 62, 66
  in pharmaceutical production, 552
  Vacuum protectors and traps, 298
  Vacuum systems, 289
  Vagina, normal microbial flora of, 11
  Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, 461, 462
  autopsy in, 464
  management of, 463
  regulations on, 472–474
  transmission of, 466, 468, 470–472, 474–475
Varicella-zoster virus, 185, 555
Variola virus
  as bioterrorism agent, 511–512, 587, 588
  BSL-4 laboratory for, 489–490
  eradication of, 511
  as gene transfer vector, 511–513
  Veillonella, 8, 9
Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus, 188–189, 517–518
  as bioterrorism agent, 587
  clinical manifestations of, 185
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 62, 179, 182
  Venoms, 253, 254, 262–263, 266
  Vent systems, in laboratory design, 289
Ventilation
  for BSL-3Ag laboratory, 580–581
  for fume hoods, 305
  in laboratory design, 276–278, 287–288
  for large-scale production, 567–568
  for toxin handling, 265
Verification forms, for student training, 540, 549
Vermin control, 292
Vertical-flow clean benches, 315
Vesicular stomatitis virus, 185
  as BSL-3 agent, 543
  laboratory-associated infections due to, 182
  Vibrion control, in laboratory design, 288–289
Vibrio, 64
  Vibrio alginolyticus, 101


**Vibrio cholerae**, 101
- host cell metabolic alterations due to, 94
- motility of, 12
- toxin of, 14, 255

**Vibrio mimicus**, 101

**Vibrio parahaemolyticus**, 61

**Vibrio vulnificus**, 12, 101

**Vibrionaceae**, 101

**Vincent’s stomatitis**, 105

**Vinyl gloves**, 353

**Virulence**
- definition of, 4
- in risk assessment, 84–85

**Virulence factors**, 11–15
- colonization, 11–13
- definition of, 4
- host immune system evasion, 13–14
- in plant pathogens, 43
- toxins, 14–15

**Viruses**, 179–207; see also specific viruses
- attenuated, 551–552
- in blood (viremia), 186
- cell line contamination with, 224–225, 235–236
- classification of, 182
- clinical manifestations of, 185–186
- diversity of, 182–183
- epidemiology of, 182–184
- as gene transfer vectors, see Gene transfer vectors
- incubation period of, 185
- infectious dose of, 184
- oncogenic, 225
- for pharmaceutical production, 551–552
- plant-associated, human disease and, 36
- postaccident management and, 201
- recombinant, 551–552
- removal of, from biologicals, 231–232
- risk matrix for, 184–185
- taxonomy of, 182

**Walk-in fume hoods, 307**

**Walls**
- in agricultural research facility, 581
- for large-scale production, 567

**Warfare, biological**, see Bioterrorism

**Warnings, for hazards**, 19, 21

**Waste handling and disposal**
- of airborne pathogens, 212, 214, 218–219
- of blood-borne pathogens, 353
- for BSL-2, 536, 543
- for BSL-4, 503–505
- of cultures, 353
- of fungi, 166, 218–219
- laboratory design for, 292
- for large-scale production, 569
- of mycobacteria, 214
- NRC guidelines for, 363–364
- of plant pathogens, 44
- regulations on, 433–434
- of sharps, 350–351, 503
- shipping regulations for, 388
- for teaching laboratories, 536, 543

**Water supply systems, in laboratory design, 289**

**Weapons, biological**, see Bioterrorism

**Websites, for cell lines, 237**

**Wesselbron virus**, 65, 189

**West Nile virus**, 62, 65, 185, 189

**Western equine encephalitis virus**, 182, 185, 188

**WHO**, see World Health Organization (WHO)

**Windows**, for BSL-4 laboratory, 506

**Woods lamps**, 541

**Work practices**
- administrative controls in, 369–370
- for agricultural pathogens, 580
- barrier use in, see Barriers
- biosafety levels in, see Biosafety levels
- for blood-borne pathogens, 351–353
- in BSL-4 laboratory, 502
- CDC guidelines for, see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- for handling infectious materials, 363–364
- history of, 361–362
- laboratory design and, 280
- NIH guidelines for, see National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- for open-fronted barriers, 321–322
- for recombinant DNA, 363, 364
- for sharps injury prevention, 349
- for toxins, 266–267
- for waste disposal, 363–364

**Work surfaces**, see Surfaces

“Workbook for Designing, Implementing, and Evaluation of a Sharps Injury Prevention Program” (CDC), 349

**Workers**, see Personnel/employees/workers

**Workers’ compensation**, 442

**Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (Canada)**, 419–420

**Workplace Safety and Hygiene (Mexico)**, 429

**WorkSafe Australia**, 418

**World Health Organization (WHO)**
- biosafety regulations of, 435
- Guidelines for the Safe Transport of Infectious Substances and Diagnostic Specimens, 435
- Laboratory Biosafety Manual of, 82–85, 89, 435, 537
- recombinant guidelines of, 86
- risk groups of, 82–85
- shipping regulations of (ICAO), 383, 384, 389, 390

**Xanthomonas**, as plant pathogen, 36

**Yaba virus**, 30, 199

**Yaounde virus**, 199

**Yatapoxvirus**, 199

**Yeasts**, see Fungi

**Yellow fever virus**, 179, 189
- as BSL-3 agent, 543
- in laboratory animals, 33
- laboratory-associated infections due to, 179, 182

**Yersinia enterocolitica**, 107
- risk assessment of, 84–85
- toxin of, 102

**Yersinia pestis**, 106–107
- as bioterrorism agent, 587, 588
- iron acquisition mechanisms of, 12
- toxin of, 261

**Yersinia pseudotuberculosis**, 107

**Zika virus**, 189

**Zoonoses**, see also Laboratory-associated infections; individual microorganisms
- from laboratory animals, 19–33, 443–444