Unit Biological Safety Audit

Main Findings and Action Points for Head of Units and Principal Investigators.

Following the main recommendations of a biosafety audit on the procedures and practices when working with biological agents which was recently conducted in a NUI Galway large research unit, as Head of your Unit you must ensure that:-

1. Risk assessments for all biological agents (BA) including genetically modified organisms have been conducted, recorded, and are up to date. These assessments must be prepared with the consultation of relevant staff who are or may be exposed to the BAs in question.

2. You give to your staff, or arrange to be given, information and training concerning potential risks to their safety and health, including:
    a. the hazardous properties of the BAs being handled
    b. the risks of aerosol production
    c. precautions against exposure
    d. containment levels and procedures
    e. hygiene requirements and etiquette
    f. the wearing and use of personal protective equipment
    g. steps to be taken in the event of incidents such as BA spills or releases and to prevent accidents
    h. the use specialist equipment and instruments, including autoclaves, safety cabinets and cryostats
    i. the management of waste
    j. the existence and implementation of your Unit's emergency plan.

3. You must ensure that your staff are fully instructed in Good Microbiological Practice and that they observe relevant standard operating procedures and house-keeping rules including appropriate security measures.

4. All relevant staff are informed of the benefits and drawbacks of vaccination, where it is necessary.

5. All relevant staff benefit from health surveillance where the risk assessment identifies a risk to their safety, health or welfare. You must also ensure that you keep records of exposures and surveillance data.

6. The Health and Safety Authority and the Environmental Protection Agency are notified in an appropriate manner before certain BAs and all GMOs are handled in your Unit.