

Guidelines for Biological Safety Committees (BSC) and Biological Safety Officers (BSO).

Introduction

There is a statutory requirement for GMO users submitting notifications under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained use) Regulations, 2001, S.I. No. 73 of 2001, to provide details of any biological committees or subcommittees. Herewith find guidelines for GMO users planning to set up Biological Safety Committees (BSC) and appoint Biological Safety Officers (BSO).

1. It is recommended that there might be a number of external persons (at least two) (non-GM users) appointed members of the Biological Safety Committees (BSC) who could bring a valuable input to a BSC but discretion should be used in this regard.
2. In relation to liability, liability should not rest with members of the BSC but with the CEO/president of the Company/University. The issue of liability needs to be considered and addressed when setting up a BSC.
3. The BSC should review and advise management in regard to biological safety procedures.
4. The appointment of a Biological Safety Officer (BSO) who would have executive responsibility is desirable.

1. Proposed functions of a Biological Safety Committee

- ⇒ advise GMO users on Risk assessment, classification of contained uses and appropriate measures to avoid adverse effects on human health or the environment that can potentially arise from the contained use;
- ⇒ advise regarding laboratory design, training of personnel, good microbiological practices (GMP) and good occupational safety and hygiene (GOS&H);
- ⇒ review periodically GMO work being undertaken at premises involving the contained use of GMOs to ensure that the GMO Regulations are being fulfilled and that Risk Assessments are correct and confirm that final classification and containment measures are adequate to control any potential GMO risks during the proposed operations;
- ⇒ consult on emergency response plans covering accidental spills and personnel contamination resulting from GMO work;

- ⇒ review the RA and containment measures applied to take into account scientific or technical knowledge in relation to risk management and the treatment and disposal of wastes arising from the use of the GMMs;
- ⇒ report the minutes of each BSC meeting to the EPA on an annual basis;
- ⇒ any other functions that may arise.

2. Proposed structure of a Biological Safety Committee

A BSC should comprise no fewer than five members so selected that they collectively have experience and expertise in GMO/rDNA technology and the capability to assess the safety of rDNA research or production involving rDNA molecules. At least two members should not be affiliated with the operation (apart from their membership on the BSC) and should represent the interest of the surrounding community with respect to health or the environment.

3. Biological Safety Officer (BSO)

The BSO should be a member of the BSC and his/her duties should include the following:

- ⇒ ensuring through periodic inspections that laboratory standards are rigorously followed;
- ⇒ report any problems relating to GMO work i.e., violations, spills, accidents and illnesses etc to the BSC, Managing Director, Project Director, or other Senior Person and to the EPA
- ⇒ developing emergency plans for dealing with accidental spills and personnel contamination and investigating rDNA research laboratory accidents;
- ⇒ providing advice on laboratory security;
- ⇒ providing technical advice to the BSC on safety procedures;
- ⇒ other duties as they arise.