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A National Biosafety and Biosecurity System in the United States

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Summary: Administration releases joint memo to agencies, plans for enhancing biosafety and biosecurity at infectious disease laboratories.

Enhancing a national biosafety and biosecurity system that protects scientists, healthcare workers, and the American public from exposure to harmful pathogens is a critical part of the Administration's efforts to conduct state-of-the-art life-sciences research and to make new lifesaving treatments, vaccines, and diagnostics widely available. Last year, we issued a [joint memo](#) to Federal departments and agencies, urging them to take both immediate and longer-term steps to address the underlying causes of laboratory incidents and to examine and strengthen biosafety and biosecurity practices. Since that time, the Administration has conducted a comprehensive review of the Federal Government's biosafety and biosecurity enterprise. Over the past year, experts from within and outside of the Federal Government reviewed the current system, discussed recent incidents, and identified best practices for the future.

Today, as a result of that work, we issued [a follow-up memorandum](#) reporting on the progress those experts have made and urging implementation of their recommendations. In addition to endorsing the [comprehensive reviews](#) conducted by these experts, Federal departments and agencies have now developed specific [plans and timelines](#) to address each recommendation. Finally, the Administration will conduct semi-annual reviews of the progress on these implementation actions.

The recommendations highlight several key principles for the national biosafety and biosecurity system, including: transparency, swift incident reporting and accountability to the public, and material stewardship that includes strong inventory management and control measures. These principles emphasize a commitment to protecting Americans and the global community, and ensuring a system designed to prevent dangerous actors from accessing or misusing sensitive biological material. In addition, while the focus of the recommendations is aimed at facilities that possess, use, or transfer the most dangerous agents, these principles should also be applied to work that is conducted with any biological agent that could pose a serious threat to public health or agriculture.

Last year, thousands of facilities across the United States underwent intensive internal assessments as part of a “Safety Stand-Down.” This effort resulted in a review of laboratory biosafety and biosecurity best practices and protocols, as well as plans for more consistent inventory monitoring. By continuing to review inventories, lab safety procedures, and security best practices, facilities can help achieve a laboratory culture of responsible conduct. Therefore, we continue to strongly encourage the application, at non-Federal as well as Federal facilities, of core principles, best practices, and the recommendations released today.

The United States has the strongest biomedical research enterprise in the world, and it is incumbent on everyone involved to ensure the safety and security of workers and communities as we continue to produce groundbreaking research in order to provide the best possible medical treatments, vaccines, and diagnostics for the American people and the international community.



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