

Guidance on signage for biological laboratory doors

Warning signage is intended to provide people who are unfamiliar with an area about significant risks to which they could be exposed; those who know an area don't actually need to be told. Using this logic, signage should only be present on laboratory doors to indicate the presence of a "significant risk" within the laboratory to which it would be possible to be exposed on entry. "Significant" risks are likely to fall into the following categories:

- a) Biohazards – for HG2 or 3 pathogens or Class 2 or 3 GM organisms
- b) Compressed gases (cylinders) – any number
- c) Flammable substances in significant quantities (i.e. >50 litres)
- d) Cryogenics if sufficient to cause an asphyxiating atmosphere (i.e. >25 litres)
- e) Radiation sources including X-ray equipment (as required by relevant legislation).

The format of each warning sign should be as indicated below. Where practicable, the sign should indicate the level of associated risk, e.g. Biohazard signs should indicate "HG2" or "Class 2" as appropriate. Similarly "Flammable" and "Cryogen" signs would provide better information for the Emergency Services should they need to enter if an approximate quantity of substance was included, e.g. "< 50 litres" or ">50 litres". Compressed gas signs should, where practicable, indicate the type of gas held (i.e. "flammable", "asphyxiant", "toxic").



In instances where HG2 pathogens are held within a freezer in one room and transported to another room to be used for research, then it would be more appropriate for the freezer to be marked "Biohazard HG2" than the room, as there is no foreseeable risk of exposure until the freezer is opened. We would then avoid the situation of a room full of freezers with a "Biohazard" sign on the access door which would cause concern for the Emergency Services in the event they had to enter.

For laboratories with non-pathogenic biological materials (HG1 or Class 1 GM), no gas cylinders or radiation sources, and minimal quantities of flammables (< 50l) and cryogenics (< 25l), no signage should be required as no significant risk exists.