

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Laboratory Safety at NIH

Testimony before the

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

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participation is emphasized in laboratory safety management and implementation. DOHS safety professionals serve on each of these committees to provide advice and guidance, and help ensure consistency in operationalizing NIH safety policies. Scientific Directors are routinely engaged in assuring rigorous adherence to procedures and developing solutions when any safety issues are identified

First, NIH identified and inventoried all potentially hazardous biological materials stored in all NIH owned and leased facilities including all infectious agents, non-regulated toxins, poisons, and venoms. During this sweep, which took place from July to September 2014, nearly 35 million samples were inventoried. Subsequent to this first step, a quality assurance check was performed on a sampling of all reported material. Additionally, NIH and other Federal agencies launched a National Biosafety Stewardship Month. Under this initiative, extramurally funded institutions were asked to voluntarily join the Federal laboratories in similarly reviewing their own procedures, training, and inventories of infectious agents and toxins all with an eye toward optimizing their programs of biosafety oversight.

For the long-term strategy, NIH developed the *Potentially Hazardous Biological Materials Management Plan*, which addresses accountability at all levels of NIH and has been fully implemented. This management plan has established:

- A mandatory centralized inventory of all potentially hazardous biological materials;

- Procedures for annual updates of inventories and more frequent updates if necessary;

- Procedures for transferring ownership/responsibility of biological materials when a researcher leaves the NIH;

- Procedures for random audits

- against the inventories;

- Appointment of an individual to oversee and be responsible for each common shared use and storage area, as well as implementation of an assurance process so that these

- appointments continue to be filled during the NIH annual management control review;

- Revised NIH policies for safety and health management and for working safely with potentially hazardous biological materials;

Implementation of a

recommendations that address many of the factors associated with recent laboratory incidents in the United States and that will inform future policy to advance biosafety and biosecurity at NIH. Further, the NIH also supported the HHS Biosafety and Biosecurity Coordinating Council, which on behalf of the Secretary, provides a high-level and formal mechanism to coordinate and collaborate on biosafety and biosecurity issues across the Department.

In closing, as Principal Deputy Director of the NIH, I can assure this Subcommittee that the senior leadership at NIH took appropriate action in 2014 and continues to act today to ensure the safety of the public and the scientists whose mission it is to find new ways to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.

trust in NIH research activities through best safety practices and strong leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.