



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Biosecurity

*Government-initiated national expertise and information centre
for organisations that work with high-risk biological material and pathogens*

Office



Biosecurity in the Netherlands

The development of vaccines and therapies against diseases, such as HIV, tuberculosis and influenza, is not possible without research into high-risk pathogens. Working with such biological agents is therefore important for medicine, science and society.

To protect both employees and the environment, the Netherlands has extensive biosafety legislation and rules of conduct in place. In addition to biosafety, the government wants laboratories also to focus on biosecurity. This involves employing measures to properly secure biological agents and knowledge to avoid misuse.

At the moment, the government is considering whether current legislation should be expanded to include biosecurity. In 2013 it commissioned the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to write the advisory report 'Improving biosecurity – assessment of dual-use research'. In addition, the government set up the Biosecurity Office, an expertise and information centre for organisations that work with high-risk biological agents in the Netherlands.

Biosecurity within your organisation

Biosecurity not only includes the more obvious measures, such as limiting access to agents and knowledge. It also requires awareness-raising in employees in various different parts of the organisation and ensuring their continued attention for biosecurity issues.

The government's aim is for biosecurity to become firmly anchored in the organisations involved. One way of doing this is to assign biosecurity to a Biorisk Professional. This position is suitable for quality assurance officers, such as biological safety officers, occupational hygienists and safety personnel. The Biorisk Professional examines whether laboratories and knowledge are sufficiently secure and whether employees have sufficient awareness with regard to the biological materials that they work with. He or she is the organisation's point of contact and knows where in the organisation biological agents are located. The Biorisk Professional ensures that biosecurity measures are implemented – for example, in quality assurance systems – and complied with. The professional is on call 24/7 to respond to emergencies during non-business hours.



Biosecurity Office

- Functions as expertise and information centre and answers questions on biosecurity.
- Helps organisations to acquire knowledge and develop tools that can be used to consolidate biosecurity within the organisation.
- Enters into discussions about biosecurity and pays visits to organisations.
- Gives lectures and workshops on biosecurity.
- Establishes a database of organisations that work with high-risk biological materials.
- Supports the government on biosecurity policy.



Who is it for?

Biosecurity is important for organisations working with high-risk biological materials, such as universities, hospitals, companies and knowledge institutes. The materials concerned are human, animal or plant pathogens. The biosecurity of these materials must be properly implemented, particularly regarding materials in the highest biosafety risk classes.

Biosafety and biosecurity

Keeping biological agents safe is referred to using two different terms: biosafety and biosecurity. Biosafety can best be described as 'keeping bad bugs away from people' and biosecurity as 'keeping bad people away from bugs'.

Biosecurity in quality assurance systems

Biosecurity cannot be separated from biosafety. Both can be included in laboratory quality assurance systems. Biosecurity is the joint task of management, biological safety officers or other quality control officers, and laboratory staff.

For more information please
visit the website
www.bureaubiosecurity.nl/en

If you have any questions, please
contact the Biosecurity Office via
biosecurity@rivm.nl
or phone **+31 (0)30 27431 20**

For biosecurity at your organisation,
a self-scan tool is available at
www.biosecuritytoolkit.com



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