



New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Critical Specimen Transport Program Fact Sheet

Overview

The purpose of the NYSDOH Critical Specimen Transport Program (CST) is to expedite transportation of clinical specimens to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center when laboratory confirmation is required in order to determine appropriate medical countermeasures, patient management, or the need for initiating public health precautions. This plan has been in place for many years and has been used on an ongoing basis for a variety of samples. In addition, critical transport of medical countermeasures from the NYS Medical Emergency Response Cache (MERC) or federally controlled assets in NYS can be expedited to a location where a patient has been exposed to an agent and requires immediate and life sustaining treatment. Clinical specimens transported under the CST protocol are most often considered 'Biological Substances, category B' (UN3373) under the Department of Transportation (DOT) Dangerous Goods Regulations, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 49. On occasion clinical specimens might be considered 'Infectious Substances, affecting humans' (UN2814), such as is the case with potential Ebola samples. As such, all samples are packaged in accordance with State and federal regulations by appropriately trained and certified staff in the facility using packaging equipment that these facilities already have. If specialized equipment or other needs are identified, these are resolved through existing internal NYSDOH processes.

How Does the CST work and when is it used?

Once it has been determined that a sample may need to be sent to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Lab, a facility such as Local Health Department, Regional Laboratory, Hospital, or other treatment facility communicates its need with the Wadsworth Laboratory or the NYSDOH Division of Epidemiology (EPI) using their existing processes.

Wadsworth Lab or Division of Epi, in consultation with the requesting entity, will determine if it is possible to send the package through traditional carriers, such as FedEx, UPS, or the US Postal System based on a variety of factors including whether or not the specimen is time-sensitive, clinical needs, etc.

Communication between the requesting entity and NYSDOH should include all pertinent details needed for transport:

- Who is requesting the CST (what facility)?
- What time frame?
- Location and point of contact (POC) (including address, number, email, etc.)
- Package details (type of agent, contents of package if possible, dry ices requirements, if any)

Laboratories and/or Division of Epi will contact the Office of Health Emergency Preparedness (OHEP) to initiate coordination of the CST if the samples are deemed time-sensitive enough to use this plan.

Once OHEP receives the initial request, they will in turn communicate with NYSDOH Regional Offices for CST coordination. OHEP Central Office, with NYSDOH Regional Offices, will coordinate the implementation of the CST protocol:

- Identification of drivers (for long distance transports, a set of relays will be established involving more than one driver)
- POC information for all drivers, facilities, and primary contacts will be collected and communicated to requesting and receiving facilities, as well as drivers.
- Once delivery has been made the CST volunteer transporter will call/email the appropriate RO/CO points of contacts to confirm that the shipment has been delivered

If you have any questions about the NYSDOH Critical Specimen Transport program, please contact your NYSDOH Regional Office Preparedness Representative or the NYSDOH Office of Health Emergency Preparedness at 518-474-2893.