



Zika Virus: Interim Advice for Irish laboratories

Zika virus is currently classified as a Hazard Group 3 (HG3) biological agent in the H.S.A 2013 Code of Practice for the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013¹. This requires that any work with this virus must be handled in a Bio safety level 3 (BSL3) containment laboratory.

The Authority notes the Zika virus has been re-classified by the UK Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) in 2013 to a Hazard Group 2 (HG2) agent². The Authority normally adopts the classifications from the UK ACDP and will consider the Zika re-classification as part of a full review of its Code of Practice in 2018.

The Authority notes an increase in the requirement to conduct diagnostic work for possible travel associated Zika infections due to current outbreak in South America. The current classification (HG3) presents difficulties for diagnostic work due to lower availability of BSL3 equipped laboratories.

The Authority, as an interim measure, provides the following advice based on the UK ACDP re-classification and recent Laboratory advice from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)³:

- Laboratory evidence of Zika Virus Infection based on detection of viral RNA by reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and/or serological diagnosis can be carried out in laboratories equipped to Bio Safety Level 2 (BSL2) containment.
- Laboratories must perform a risk assessment to determine if certain procedures e.g. aerosol generating, or specimens may require higher levels of containment i.e. Biological Safety Cabinet. For virus isolation through culture, the sample should be handled under BSL 3 containment as a precautionary measure due to possibility of presence of other pathogens that belong to risk Group 3 (e.g. dengue virus).

Health and Safety Authority
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¹ [2013 H.S.A Code of Practice for the SHWW Biological Agents Regulations 2013](#)

² [The Approved List of Biological Agents \(UK ACDP\) 2013](#)

³ <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/zika-virus-guidance-healthcare-providers-and-laboratory-diagnosis.pdf>