



Community Engagement on Pathogen Research: A USAMRIID Perspective

Caree Vander Linden, Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases
Fort Detrick, Maryland

301 619 2285

teresa.l.vanderlinden.civ@mail.mil

www.usamriid.army.mil

UNCLASSIFIED / FOUO



About USAMRIID

- Research conducted at USAMRIID leads to medical solutions—vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and training programs—that benefit both military and public health.
- USAMRIID is the only laboratory in the Department of Defense equipped to safely study highly hazardous viruses requiring maximum containment at Biosafety Level 4.
- USAMRIID’s research program is unclassified, but as a military laboratory, we have operational security concerns that limit the types of information that can be widely shared.



About Frederick

- Frederick County pop. ~260,000
- Frederick City pop. ~70,000 (“big small town”)
- Fort Detrick is Frederick County’s largest employer (~10,000 jobs)
- USAMRIID is largest tenant (~900 military/civilian/contract personnel)
- “Hometown” media outlets
 - Frederick News Post
 - WFRE-FM (local news radio)
 - WDVM-TV (local television news)



Brief History

- 1943 Camp Detrick (later Fort Detrick) research program begins
- 1969 USAMRIID established for medical biological defense research
- 2006 Environmental Impact Statement process initiated
 - New USAMRIID building to replace existing facility
 - Significant public opposition during EIS comment period
 - National Research Council study commissioned
- 2010 NRC issues report on health/safety risks of new USAMRIID facility
 - “High degree of confidence” in USAMRIID’s program but...
 - Sees need for increased two-way communication with the public
 - Recommends formation of community advisory board



Community Engagement

- 2010 Containment Laboratory Community Advisory Committee established
 - Joint City-County committee of citizen volunteers
 - Started with monthly meetings and intense public interest
 - Currently meets on quarterly basis
- 3 Fort Detrick containment laboratories (including USAMRIID)
 - Provided initial tours/briefings/background information
 - Respond to committee/public questions
 - Maintain ongoing dialogue with committee (USAMRIID is liaison)



Recent Events

- MAY 2018 Failure of steam sterilization plant
 - Shutdown of containment laboratory operations
 - Implementation of chemical decontamination system for treating effluent
 - Multiple changes in work practice controls leading to deviations from SOPs
- JULY 2019 Suspension of Federal Select Agent Program registration
 - Completely revised training, mentorship and compliance programs
 - De-commissioned chemical system and installed new thermal system
 - Research plan for limited number of studies with newly trained personnel
- NOV 2019 Letter from CDC authorizing partial resumption of research



Challenges

- Army and DoD oversight, in addition to multiple regulatory agencies
- Close coordination of notifications, in the proper order
- Balancing the need for transparency with operational security*
 - Safety metrics on website first published in 2013
 - Number of suite entries used as “denominator”
 - 3-year look-back updated 1st Q of each calendar year

*Sharing summary information (not raw data or internal reports)

United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases

Biodefense Solutions To Protect Our Nation



USAMRIID Incidents in BSL-3 & 4 Laboratories: 2016, 2017, and 2018

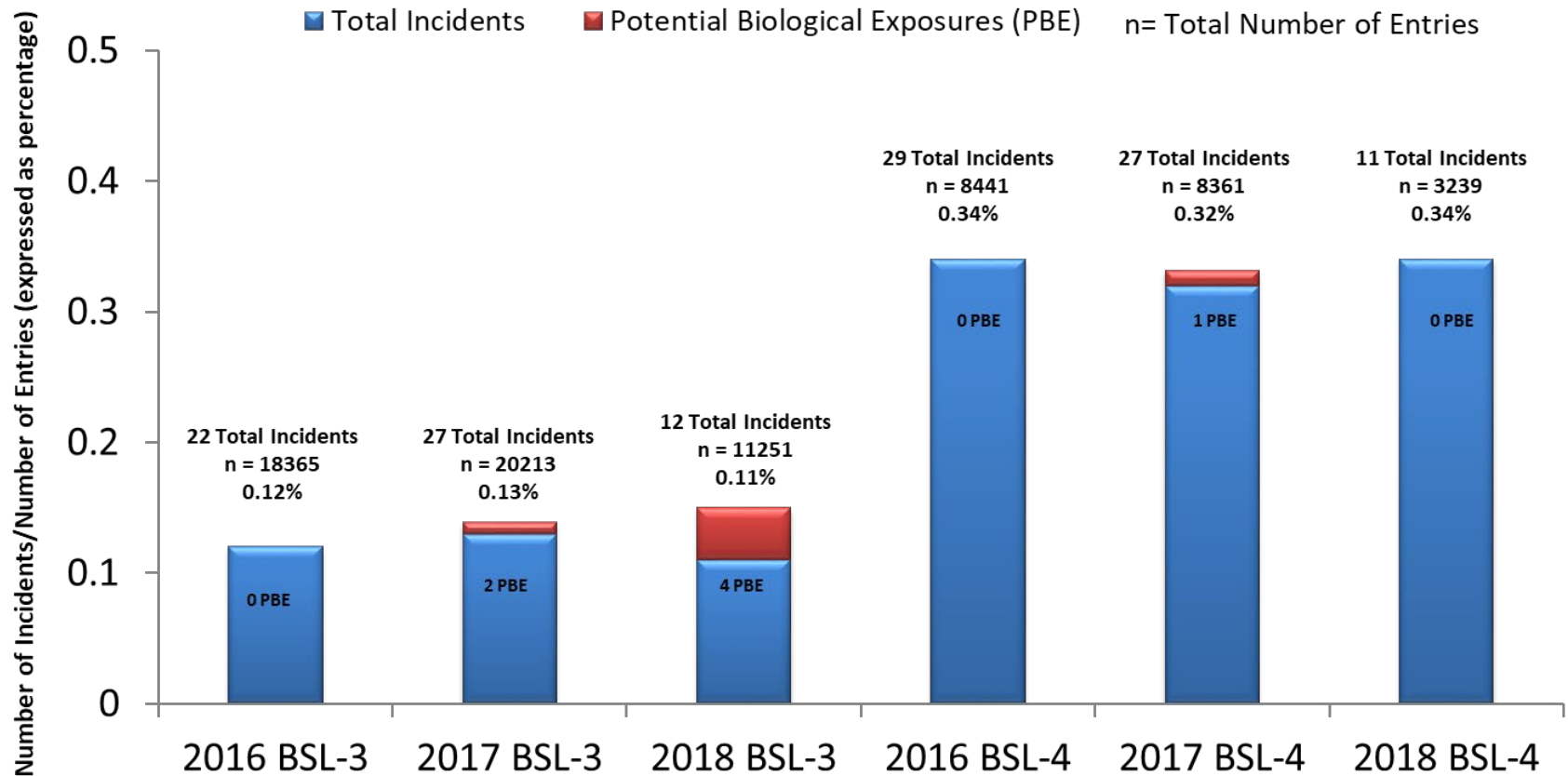
Incident Type	BSL-3			BSL-4		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Occupational Illness	0	0	0	0	0	0
Biological Spill/Leak within Laboratory	10	4	1	0	1	0
Biological Incident	0	7	8 ⁽⁴⁾	0	1	0
Positive Pressure Encapsulating Suit (non-glove) Mishap	0	0	0	16	11 ⁽¹⁾	6
Positive Pressure Encapsulating Suit - Glove Mishap	0	0	0	8	10	5
Equipment Malfunction (Does not include Positive Pressure Encapsulating Suit/Glove Mishaps)	2	5 ⁽¹⁾	0	0	0	0
Splash – Potential Skin Contact (Includes all biologicals)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contusions/Abrasions	2	0	0	2	0	0
Burn (Includes thermal and electrical)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lifting/Bending	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lacerations	3	4	3	2	0	0
Needlestick	1	4 ⁽¹⁾	0	0	0	0
Slips/Trips/Falls	0	1	0	1	2	0
Animal Bite	0	1	0	0	0	0
Animal Scratch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	4	1	0	0	2	0
Total:	22⁽⁰⁾	27⁽²⁾	12⁽⁴⁾	29⁽⁰⁾	27⁽¹⁾	11⁽⁰⁾

For entries where a number is followed by a superscript, or smaller number in parentheses (#), this represents the total number of incidents for that category, followed by the number of incidents within that category that were assessed as Potential Biological Exposures. A superscript of zero indicates there were no PBEs. A Potential Biological Exposure means that there was some risk of exposure to infectious agents and/or toxins, and that the personnel involved were placed on medical surveillance as a precaution. In all of these cases, no symptoms were reported and there were no signs of disease resulting from these incidents.



Number of Incidents per Number of Entries (%) for BSL-3 & BSL-4 Suites

Potential Biological Exposures show as subset of Total Incidents
USAMRIID had no Actual Biological Exposures for 2016, 2017, or 2018



USAMRIID security tracks the number of times employees enter BSL-3 and BSL-4 laboratory suites. As one indicator of our safety performance, we can look at the number of incidents compared against the total number of entries in a given time period.

A PBE means that some risk of exposure to infectious agents and/or toxins may have occurred, resulting in precautionary medical surveillance of the personnel involved. In each of these cases during 2016, 2017, and 2018, no illness or disease occurred.



Summary

- It's not perfect and sometimes we “agree to disagree” but...
 - CLCAC gives us another way to hear from the public.
 - We can reach out with important information we need to share.
 - Committee members can be a credible voice in the community.
- Final thoughts:
 - People often fear what they don't understand.
 - Keep the message simple and always engage respectfully.
 - We have a vested interest in being safe...we live here too.