

**ABSA**

American Biological Safety Association

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Fax: 847-566-4580 • E-mail: info@absa.org • Web Site: www.absa.org**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****American Biological Safety Association (ABSA) Response to Recent Events at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Mundelein, Illinois (ABSA, Inc.) July 16, 2014 – The American Biological Safety Association (ABSA) is extremely concerned about the recent events involving anthrax and H5N1 influenza virus at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The practices that have been revealed, such as using inactivation procedures that have not been validated for specific organisms, the transfer of material out of containment that has not been confirmed to be inactive, a lack of oversight into research and procedures by an Institutional Biosafety Committee, use of pathogenic strains when non-pathogenic strains would suffice, and not reporting a significant breach in the Select Agent Program to upper management in a timely fashion, are practices that cannot be tolerated in any facility, much less the CDC, which is responsible for oversight of the Select Agents and Toxins Program.

Biosafety professionals in the U.S. acknowledge the critical role of CDC in developing comprehensive guidelines for the use of infectious agents, via the publication *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (BMBL)*. The CDC is instrumental in providing guidance for healthcare workers, medical professionals, travelers, researchers, and institutions wishing to use Select Agents and Toxins, outbreak situations, etc. It is critical that the CDC apply its rigorous standards to its own activities, since they have proven to be effective and achievable in institutions with a robust biosafety program.

Appropriate practices and systems for handling infectious agents are proven and available. All research, regardless of the location, can be conducted safely provided there are appropriate engineering controls, administrative controls, and work practices in place. Top priorities must include a robust biosafety management program, employee training on standard microbiological practices as well as laboratory-specific techniques, and well-maintained laboratory facilities that are adequate for the level of work. These requirements for safe science can and should be reinforced by a peer-review process, whether it be internal or external or a combination of both. Such a comprehensive program of practice and oversight requires a sustained and substantial financial and manpower commitment from upper management.

The American Biological Safety Association's 1,400 members represent 37 countries as well as the U.S. and include microbiologists, veterinarians, industrial hygienists, engineers, architects, doctors, nurses, and other technical experts, representing academia and research institutions, government laboratories, as well as private industry. This repository of biological safety expertise is available to partner with the CDC as it moves forward with corrective actions.

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