



HMS Primary Responsible Office: COMS Office of Biological Safety (COMS Office)

Approval Body: Committee on Microbiological Safety (COMS)

Version Number: 100.3

Version Approval Date: 5-29-2026

Effective Date: 3-11-2011

Contact: COMS@hms.harvard.edu

COMS Inspection Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set minimum requirements for inspections of COMS (Committee on Microbiological Safety)-registered research spaces and standardize the reporting of inspection data by Biosafety Officers (BSOs) to the COMS Office and COMS committee members.

II. Applicability

All laboratories that have an approved COMS application must have a current laboratory inspection date and have addressed all findings related to biosafety from their laboratory inspection.

III. Definitions

Annual: Inspections that are conducted within one calendar year of the previous inspection. Unless an extension is granted by the COMS Office, the inspection should be completed within 30 days of the date of the previous years' inspection.

Biennial: Inspections that are conducted within two calendar years of the previous inspection. Unless an extension is granted by the COMS Office, the inspection should be completed within 30 days of the date of the previous inspection.

IV. Implementation procedures

Oversight

Federal, state, and local regulations governing the establishment of the Institutional Biosafety Committee (known here as the Committee on Microbiological Safety (COMS)) assign the responsibility of assessing the appropriateness of the facilities, procedures, practices, training and expertise of personnel involved in recombinant DNA research. In order to fulfil these, COMS requires the following:

BSOs submit completed inspection dates as part of each COMS protocol submission. BSOs ensure filing of reports for any issues identified during inspections, in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, as well as the COMS Incident Reporting Policy.

Review:

Documents and significant inspection results submitted by BSOs to fulfill the requirements above will be reviewed by the COMS Office, The Director may raise specific documents or inspection results to the attention of COMS Chair and/or Committee.

Frequency:

The local and federal regulations and policy require that BSOs (or designated inspectors) conduct periodic laboratory inspections to ensure that laboratory standards are rigorously followed. COMS requires that inspections of all laboratories with active COMS registrations be conducted once per calendar year (annually) for Biosafety Level 2 (BL2) and Biosafety Level 3 (BL3). COMS requires Biosafety Level 1 (BL1) laboratories to be inspected at least once every other calendar year (biennially).

Reporting:

Inspection findings are not reported to COMS unless they were due to a laboratory incident.

V: Policy Authority: The Committee on Microbiological Safety shall enforce this policy.

VII: Related References:

- [Lab Safety Assessments & Inspection](#)
- [Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories \(BMBL\) 6th Edition](#)
- [NIH Guidelines](#)
- [Boston Public Health Commission Regulations: Biological Laboratory Regulations](#)
- [Cambridge Public Health Department: Laboratory Biosafety](#)