



**City and County of San Francisco
Department of Public Health Laboratory**

Ebola Specimen Shipping FAQ

Updated 10/30/2014

Who should I contact first if I have a suspect Ebola case?

Call SFDPH Communicable Disease Control immediately at 415-554-2830. After hours, please follow the instructions to page the on-call physician.

Who is the San Francisco Public Health Lab (SFPHL) contact?

Dr. Severin Gose – Interim Laboratory Director – severin.gose@sfdph.org – 415-554-2685

Where is Ebola testing being done?

The Los Angeles County Public Health Lab can conduct preliminary Ebola testing. Confirmatory testing is only available at the CDC in Atlanta, GA.

Is pre-approval needed before I send a specimen?

Yes. Both the LA County Public Health Lab and the CDC require pre-approval. SFDPH Communicable Disease Control will assist with this process.

Is testing available after hours and on the weekends?

Yes. Both the LA County Public Health Lab and the CDC will test specimens after hours and on the weekends with pre-approval.

What are the specimen requirements?

For both CDC and LA County Public Health Lab: A minimum volume of 4mL whole blood in plastic collection tubes can be used to submit specimens for testing for Ebola virus. Do not submit specimens to CDC in glass containers or in heparinized tubes. Whole blood preserved with EDTA is preferred but whole blood preserved with; sodium polyanethol sulfonate (SPS), citrate, or with clot activator is acceptable. It is not necessary to separate and remove serum or plasma from the primary collection container. Specimens should be immediately stored or transported at 2-8°C or frozen on cold-packs to the CDC. Specimens other than blood may be submitted upon consult with the CDC by calling the Emergency Operations Center at 770-488-7100.

Additional Resources:

[CDC Interim Guidance for Specimen Collection, Transport, Testing, and Submission for Persons Under Investigation for Ebola Virus Disease in the United States](#)
[CDC Laboratory Testing Fact Sheet](#)

Can the SFPHL assist with phlebotomy?

No.

What shipping category are Ebola specimens?

Ebola specimens are high-risk Category A biological specimens.

Which carriers will ship Ebola specimens?

World Courier is the only U.S. company that will ship Ebola specimens.

What forms are required?

[LA Country Public Health Lab Requisition](#)

[CDC Viral Special Pathogens Branch Submission Form](#)

[CDC Infectious Disease Submission Form](#)

World Courier Customer Order Form: Contact SFPHL

World Courier Dangerous Goods Declaration: Contact SFPHL

World Courier Waybill: Contact SFPHL

Do I need dry ice to ship an Ebola diagnostic specimen?

No. Specimens can be shipped at 2-8 C° or frozen on cold packs.

I don't know how to fill out the forms, where can I get assistance?

The SFPHL has created templates of all the necessary shipping and submission forms and can assist you with this process.

I don't have Category A shipping supplies, where can I get some?

The SFPHL has category A shipping supplies in stock and can provide them.

I don't have Category A shipping-certified staff, who can help me package an Ebola specimen?

The SFPHL has three senior staff that are category A shipping-certified that can assist you with packaging the specimen. Although this service cannot be guaranteed 24/7, SFPHL staff have volunteered to assist after hours if necessary.

What is the specific protocol if I need SFPHL staff to assist in packaging an Ebola specimen?

The hospital/clinical lab will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Drawing the blood specimen.
2. Labeling the blood tube with the patient information.
3. Placing the labeled blood tube inside a biohazard specimen bag.
4. Decontaminating the exterior of the biohazard specimen bag with 10% bleach.
5. Placing the decontaminated biohazard bag inside a Category A secondary container (rigid plastic screw top container supplied by SFPHL).

The SFPHL staff will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Accepting the closed Category A secondary container.
2. Packaging the specimen
3. Labeling the package
4. Assisting with filling out the LA county public health lab, CDC and World Courier paperwork.
5. Scheduling the shipment with World Courier if the hospital doesn't have an account.

I don't have a World Courier account, what should I do?

The SFPHL has a World Courier account set up specifically for Ebola specimen shipping that can be used. If you would like to set up your own World Courier account, please contact them at 800-221-6600.

I can't pay for the World Courier shipment, what should I do?

Please contact SFDPH Communicable Disease Control to discuss this matter.

Who can I contact at the SFPHL with additional questions about Ebola specimen shipping?

Dr. Severin Gose, Interim Director SFPHL – 415-554-2685 – severin.gose@sfdph.org

Additional Ebola resources:

[SFDPH Communicable Disease Control Ebola Information Page](#)

[SFDPH Ebola Health Alerts/Advisories](#)

[California Department of Health Ebola Information Page](#)