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Guidance on regulations for the **Transport of Infectious Substances** 2017–2018

Applicable as from 1 January 2017

Country Health Emergency Preparedness & IHR

World Health Organization

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approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

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Acknowledgement

The extracts from the Recommendations on the *Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations*, 19th revised edition, New York and Geneva, United Nations, 2015 are reproduced by kind permission of the United Nations.

Note to the reader:

This document replaces the *WHO Guidance on regulations for the transport of infectious substances 2015-2016.*

For the reader's ease, updated text is highlighted as follows:

- modified text

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Introduction

Infectious substances are transported for a variety of different reasons, within countries and across international borders. It is incumbent upon shippers to ensure packaging and shipping conditions meet regulatory requirements to preserve the integrity of materials, and facilitate their timely arrival at destination.

Postal, airline and other transport industry personnel may have concerns about the possibility of becoming infected as the result of exposure to infectious microorganisms that may escape from broken, leaking or improperly packaged material. The packaging of infectious substances for transport must therefore be designed to minimize the potential for damage during transport. In addition, the packaging must ensure the integrity of the materials and so, in turn, timely and accurate processing of specimens.

The following guidelines provide information for classifying infectious substances for transportation and ensuring their safe packaging. They stress the importance of developing a working relationship between those involved – the sender, the carrier and the receiver – in order to provide for safe and expeditious transport of these materials.

❖ These guidelines provide practical guidance to facilitate compliance with applicable international regulations for the transport of infectious substances and patient specimens by all modes of transport, both nationally and internationally, and include the changes that apply from 1 January 2017. They replace the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015 (document WHO/CDS/IHR/2015.2). This publication, however, does not replace national and international transport regulations.

Today, thousands of samples of infectious substances need to be shipped and are shipped daily around the world. Human and animal specimens are collected and shipped for a variety of reasons, including disease investigations, clinical trials, surveillance studies, antidoping testing, routine analyses, etc. Regular and occasional shippers consign infectious substances for transport on a daily basis. These include the pharmaceutical industry, health care facilities, diagnostic and research laboratories, medical practitioners, and individual patients.

In the interest of global public health, human and animal specimens need to be transported safely, timely, efficiently and legally from the place where they are collected to the place where they will be analyzed. Regardless of the presumed infection status of the patient, specimens of human and animal origin should be packaged and transported in such a way as to protect those engaged in transportation from the risk of infection. Risks of infection of personnel involved in transport may not be fully eliminated. However, they can undoubtedly be kept to a minimum. In addition, damage to packaging also means that samples dispatched for urgent tasks like analyses are unlikely to arrive to destination on time.