

Secretariat

Building 5
Porton Down
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 OJQ

T 01980 61 3121
F 01980 65 8400

Dstl is part of the
Ministry of Defence

dstlfoi@dstl.gov.uk
www.dstl.gov.uk



Our ref: FOI 2014/07993
Your ref:

06 January 2015

Dear _____

Thank you for your email of 6 December 2014 requesting the following information:

“could you provide details of all accidents and or security breaches involving biological agents, nerve agents or gases or any other lethal chemicals at Porton Down over the last four years”.

We are treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and we can confirm that all of the information in scope of your request is held.

The information you have requested can be found below:

The following data is for the period 1st December 2010 to 1st December 2014. All the events below were reported via the Dstl process for incidents, which assesses the severity of the incident and applies an investigation process proportional to this severity, resulting in corrective actions being applied. There were no reportable accidents during the period requested; however, there were six RIDDOR¹-reportable incidents concerning five biological agents and one lethal chemical.

Date	Cat	Description
Jan 2011	Bio	A staff member dropped a sealed box containing 36 plates of Hazard Group 3 ² that had been incubated for 48 hours onto the floor. Six of the plates broke and spilt their contents. Lab correctly evacuated and area decontaminated. No ill health effects reported and the agent was contained within the laboratory. Reported to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as RIDDOR reportable.
Feb 2011	Bio	A staff member noticed that one of the lids had come off a Bio-Jar when transferring macrophage assays samples. No ill health effects reported and the agent was contained within the laboratory. Reported to HSE as RIDDOR reportable.

May 2012	Chem	While working in the lab, the glove of a toxic chemical handler caught a vial that projected the vial out of the fume-hood onto the floor. Processes and procedures reviewed. No ill health effects reported and the agent was contained within the laboratory. Reported to HSE as RIDDOR reportable.
Sept 2012	Bio	A staff member was viewing a wet slide of Hazard Group 3 material under a microscope. Staff member was adjusting the focus when the objective lens broke the microscope slide. Lab correctly evacuated and area decontaminated. No ill health effects reported and the agent was contained within the laboratory. Equipment error. Reported to HSE as RIDDOR reportable.
Feb 2013	Bio	Small tear in procedural Isolator half-suit at CL4 ³ noticed during pre-user checks. No risk of release or escape of biological agent. Process and procedures reviewed and post-user checks added as an additional control measure. Reported as requested by HSE inspector as RIDDOR.
Apr 2013	Bio	Pre-user check of primary containment identified a small perforation in the left-hand suit (right-hand glove). No risk of release or escape of biological agent. Manufacturer contacted. Reported as requested by HSE inspector as RIDDOR.

Footnotes

¹ Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

² Hazard Group 3 - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc208.pdf>

³ Containment Level 4 - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc208.pdf>

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Dstl Secretariat