



Book Review

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Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism

The National Academies Press*

500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001

164 pp., \$35.00, paperback. ISBN 0-309-08977-8

Simply put, *Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism* should be on the reading list for practicing Biosafety Professionals, especially those who have select agents in their programs. The text was compiled by the Committee on Research Standards and Practices to Prevent the Destructive Application of Biotechnology, which is a component of the National Academies. The committee consists of reputable EHS and scientific personnel and is chaired by Gerald Fink. Using concise yet adequate detail, the committee has described nearly all the major policies related to biotechnology research that would concern those who are responsible for biosafety. It brings together an outline of wide-ranging policy that one will likely encounter as part of managing biological safety and security programs at research facilities. Relevant key points are explained on each policy in just one paragraph, in some cases, and in a few pages where necessary. A notes section at the end of each paragraph indicating from where the information was gleaned serves as a reference to where the reader can gain further detail on the included statements.

The executive summary outlines seven recommendations developed by the committee. For example, one of the recommendations is to augment the existing role of the Recombinant DNA guidelines to include review of experiments that may have dual use-like implications. In the months since the text was published, we have already seen change consistent with the recommendations. For example, one recommendation was to create the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity for which a charter was signed by the Secretary of HHS, Tommy Thompson, on March 4, 2004. A “Case Study in Preconsideration” on a mouse pox virus study performed in Australia drives the point that international policy needs to be implemented. This was a study that has dual use implications which would not be publishable under U.S. guidelines, but could have been published in European or Australian journals where U.S. policies have no effect.

The information found in this text can help the mid- and senior-level professional understand the relationship between the vast collections of policy encountered daily in the biosafety profession. It also serves to provide the entry level professional an introduction to the policies that one can expect to encounter as experience is gained in the field.

**Authored by the National Research Council's Committee on Research Standards and Practices to Prevent the Destructive Application of Biotechnology, Development, Security, and Cooperation, National Research Council*