

The Biohazard Symbol

According to an article in the New York Times and an article in Science the Biohazard symbol was developed Charles L. Baldwin of Dow Chemicals and Robert S. Runkle of the NIH in 1966.

A good discussion of the symbol and a technical diagram for the symbol can be found in the NIH Laboratory Safety Monograph, published in 1978, on page 113 and 114 and is as follows:

“G. Biohazard Symbol and Its Use

A biological hazard symbol is used internationally to indicate the actual or potential presence of a biohazard and to identify equipment, containers, rooms, materials, experimental animals or combinations thereof can be obtained commercially and placed upon a placard that is large enough for the symbol together with other appropriate information. The term "biohazard" for the purpose of this symbol is defined as "those infectious agents presenting a risk or potential risk to the well-being of man, either directly through his infection or indirectly through disruption of his environment."

The symbol is a fluorescent orange or an orange-red color. There is no requirement for the background color as long as there is sufficient contrast to permit the symbol to be clearly defined. The symbol shall be as prominent as practical, of a size consistent with the size of the equipment or material to which it is affixed, and easily seen from as many directions as possible.

The biohazard symbol is used or displayed only to signify the actual or potential presence of a biological hazard. Appropriate wording may be used in association with the symbol to indicate the nature or identity of the hazard, name of individual responsible for its control, precautionary information, etc., but never should this information be superimposed on the symbol.

Illustrations of the design and proportioning of the symbol and of the symbol used on an access control placard are shown on the following pages. The use of the biohazard symbol in recombinant DNA research is summarized in the table.”

Other Reference Material

NYTimes: <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/orsp/coms/BiosafetyResources/History-of-Biohazard-Symbol.htm>

Science: <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/orsp/coms/BiosafetyResources/1967-10-13-Science-paper-Biohazard-Symbol.pdf>

The technical diagram is on the next page.

