Frequently Asked Questions from ISEF website.

Does my project need prior review and approval?

All projects need an initial review by an adult sponsor which is documented on Form 1. Studies involving human subjects need additional review and approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This board should be established at your school or your regional fair.

Studies involving vertebrate animals or potentially hazardous biological agents require an additional review and approval by your fair's Scientific Review Committee (SRC).

Hazardous chemicals, activities and devices require an additional review by a supervising adult and a Risk Assessment Form must be completed.

Can one committee serve as both an SRC and IRB?

Yes, if your committee includes a biomedical scientist, science teacher, school administrator and someone knowledgeable and capable of evaluating physical and/or psychological risk involved in a study involving human subjects.

Who can serve as a Designated Supervisor for my project?

The Designated Supervisor may be a teacher, adult sponsor, parent, university professor or scientist who will be directly responsible for overseeing the experiment. The Designated Supervisor need not have an advanced degree, but should be thoroughly familiar with the student's project and must be trained in the student's area of research.

If I conduct my study in a location other than a school or home, do I need a Form 1C?

A Form 1C is required for experiments or equipment use on projects in research institutions, commercial or college laboratories, government or industrial settings (i.e. machine shop, manufacturer facility), and medical facilities. The form needs to be completed by the supervising scientist AFTER you have completed your work. In addition to submitting a Form 1C, you need to check the appropriate box on Student Checklist Form 1A, question 7.

How do I determine if a chemical is hazardous?

Ask your supervising adult and consult the Material Safety and Data Sheet (MSDS) for the chemical(s) you plan to use. Some MSDS sheets (e.g. Flinn), rank the degree of hazard associated with a chemical. Generally a rating more than 1 should be considered hazardous. It is possible that two or more chemicals ranked 0 or 1 when mixed can react and form a hazardous chemical.

Can I culture potentially hazardous biological agents at home?

No - collection may be done at home, but the culturing must be done at a school or a lab, given the potential risks inherent in the process

How do I find out the Biosafety level of an organism?

Visit the website for the American Biological Safety Association at www.absa.org or the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) at www.atcc.org

Should all studies using water or soil collected from the environment be considered involving potentially hazardous biological agents?

No. Even though water and soil could contain potentially pathogenic organisms, studies involving these samples are considered potentially hazardous only when the sample is cultured. The use of a coliform test kit to determine the presence of coliform bacteria does not categorize the project as one involving potentially hazardous biological agents.

What is a blood by-product?

Blood by-products result from the separation of blood and can include red blood cells, plasma, Factor 8, etc. These products must follow the rules of Potentially Hazardous Biological Agents (PHBA), as their handling and use can require special safety precautions.