

Safety Bugle

Today's Topic: Bloodborne Pathogens



What are Bloodborne Pathogens?

They are microorganisms (e.g., viruses or bacteria) that are present in human body blood or body fluid that cause disease in humans. The three blood borne pathogens that have received the most attention and pose a serious health threat if contracted, are the:

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause severe damage to your liver, leading to liver failure.
- Hepatitis C virus (HCV) which causes a severe form of hepatitis in some or acts as a carrier in others.
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS.

Methods of Transmission

Blood borne pathogens are usually transmitted or passed on when disease organisms enter the body through mucus membranes or through breaks in the skin. While intact skin offers some protection against blood borne pathogens, they may be transmitted through the breaks in skin via accidents, injuries or burns. They may also enter the body through open cuts, nicks, skin abrasions and cracked skin caused by various types of dermatitis. At work, the most common exposure to blood borne pathogens could occur when an infected worker has an injury causing direct exposure to human blood and the person who helps them is not wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or practicing universal precautions.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions is a method of infection control in which all blood and certain human body fluids are treated as if known to be infectious. Universal precautions are to be observed in all situations where there is a potential for contact with blood or other potentially infectious material. PPE should be used in conjunction with universal precautions when dealing with all body fluids. Qualified, trained first aid responders should be equipped to safeguard against this exposure. You should be aware that there is a good possibility that you may have small nicks or cuts on you from daily work activities and jobs tasks. These nicks and cuts, in addition to your mouth, nose and eyes are examples of possible entry-ways for blood borne pathogens, present in the injured person, to enter your circulatory system.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment, which includes latex or vinyl gloves, gowns, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags, and face masks can significantly reduce the health risks for

workers exposed to blood and other potentially infectious materials. The PPE must be suitable for the level of expected exposure and should be readily accessible to employees and available in appropriate sizes. Employees should be trained on the proper use of PPE and how to respond effectively and safely to an injury.

What happens if I am exposed?

If you get blood or other potentially infectious materials on your skin, mucous membranes, or clothing, you should wash the exposed area gently but thoroughly or remove your soiled clothing. Report this exposure to your supervisor.

If you suspect that blood or other potentially infectious materials have entered your eyes, nose, or mouth or if you have damaged skin in the area where the blood made contact with your skin, you must receive a medical evaluation to determine if there is any possibility that you will become infected. A qualified healthcare professional will provide you with treatment and information regarding your risks of infection.

OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard

OSHA's Blood borne Pathogen Standard, 29 CFR Part 1910.1030, sets forth requirements to protect workers from occupational exposure to blood borne pathogens. The standard covers all employees, who could reasonably be anticipated to be exposed or have contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials as the result of performing their job duties. OSHA has not attempted to list all occupations where exposures could occur, however designated first aid providers are, in most cases, covered by the standard. Citations can be issued based on the current standard or under the "General Duty Clause" because the employer has not provided a workplace free from recognized hazards.

The standard requires employers to establish a written exposure control plan which would identify workers with occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material and specify means to protect and train the worker.

Anytime you see this sign, know that the material is hazardous:

