

Propel HR

• Payroll Services • Workers' Compensation • Employee Benefits • Human Resources Mgmt

SAFETY

September 2003

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Employers must minimize the exposure of employees to bloodborne pathogens whenever the potential for that exposure exists. OSHA has taken the position that there are no "risk-free" populations, and enforcement of OSHA's "general duty clause" implies that employers must be knowledgeable of and comply with the bloodborne pathogens standard.

MEANS OF TRANSMISSION

What are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms in the blood or other body fluids that can cause illness and disease in people. These microorganisms can be transmitted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids.

The most common bloodborne disease is the hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV attacks the liver and is transmitted through saliva, blood and other body fluids. The transmission rate ranges from 2-40%.

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is primarily transmitted through sexual contact, though it may also be contracted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids. The transmission rate for contracting HIV/AIDS ranges from .2-.4%.

Transmission occurs when contaminated blood or body fluids enter the body such as through:

- Accidental puncture by a contaminated sharp object such as needles, scalpels, broken glass and razor blades.
- Open cuts or skin abrasions in contact with contaminated blood or body fluids.
- Sexual contact.
- Indirect transmission (touching dried blood and touching the eyes, mouth, nose or open cut).

You can NOT be infected through touching an infected person, through coughing or sneezing or by using the same equipment, materials, toilets, water fountains or showers as an infected person.

Protect Yourself When Administering First Aid

1. Wear latex or neoprene gloves.
2. Cover your eyes with goggles or safety glasses with side shields.
3. Use a face shield if blood is spurting.
4. If gloves are not immediately available, have the victim apply pressure and bandage the wound him/herself. Or use plastic bags, plastic wrap or other barrier that will prevent contact between your skin and the victim's blood.
5. Use tongs, brushes, dust pans, etc to clean up after an accident involving spilled blood.
6. Wear gloves when you dispose of materials used to clean up spilled blood.
7. Remove blood-stained clothing and wash it.
8. Wash your hands (and any other exposed skin) with soap and water.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN STANDARD

The Bloodborne Pathogen Standard is a detailed explanation of what employers must do to protect employees whose jobs put them at a reasonable risk of coming into contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials. Examples of such job classifications are those working in healthcare (physicians, dentists, etc), law enforcement personnel and maintenance workers (plumbers, etc). The standard affects any employee who may come in contact with human blood and other potentially infectious materials as a result of performing his/her duties.

The standard requires employers to follow these 9 steps:

1. **Establish an exposure control plan.** This is a written plan for employers with a reasonable risk of hazard exposure that must be updated annually.
2. **Use engineering controls.** Employers should use devices such as sharps disposal containers and safer medical devices that isolate or remove the bloodborne pathogen hazard from the workplace.
3. **Enforce workplace practice controls.** These are practices that reduce the likelihood of exposure by changing the way a task is performed; hand washing, sharps disposal, laundry handling, etc.
4. **Provide personal protective equipment such as gloves, gowns and masks.** Employers must clean, repair and replace this equipment as needed.
5. **Make available Hepatitis B vaccinations to all employees with occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens within 10 days of assignment.**
6. **Provide post-exposure follow up to any worker who experiences an exposure incident, at no cost to the worker;** conducting lab tests, testing exposed employee's blood, etc.
7. **Use labels and signs to communicate hazards.** Labels should mark regulated waste, all containers used to store or transplant blood or other potentially infectious materials. Employers should post signs to identify restricted areas.
8. **Provide information and training to employees.** Employees must be trained when hired and then annually. Training should review dangers of bloodborne pathogens, preventive practices and post-exposure procedures.
9. **Maintain employee medical and training records.** Employers must maintain a Sharps Injury Log. *Propel HR* will record such injuries on your OSHA Log when reported.

The Bloodborne Pathogen standard does not apply to the Construction or Agriculture industries.

However, that does not mean these industries are free from the hazards of bloodborne pathogens.

If you have not established an **exposure control plan**, and believe you and your employees have potential risk for exposure, please contact ***Propel HR***. We can assist you with implementing a control plan for your company.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this newsletter or other Safety or Human Resources questions, please contact ***Propel HR*** at 800-446-6567 or 864-271-7611.