



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Bloodborne Pathogens

OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) as amended pursuant to the 2000 Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act, is a regulation that prescribes safeguards to protect workers against health hazards related to bloodborne pathogens. It has provisions for exposure control plans, engineering and work practice controls, hepatitis B vaccinations, hazard communication and training, and recordkeeping. The standard imposes requirements on employers of workers who may be exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials such as certain tissues and body fluids.



What are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Workers in many occupations including health care professionals such as nurses, CNAs, therapists, first responders, medical technicians, and (lesser incidence for) housekeepers and maintenance staff, may be at risk for exposure to bloodborne pathogens (BBP).

The CDC estimates that 5.6 million workers in the health care industry and related occupations are at risk of occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. All occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) places workers at risk for infection from bloodborne pathogens.

Key Reminders about Bloodborne Pathogens:

1. Employers must establish and annually review their Exposure Control Plan.
2. The employer should make available the hepatitis B vaccination series to all employees who have occupational exposure(s) within 10 days of hire or placement at no cost to the worker.
3. Universal precautions should be observed by all workers to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
4. Employers must provide and train workers on the selection, use and disposal Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
5. Proper hand washing facilities and protocols are critical to preventing the possible spread or exposure of pathogens.
6. Follow established protocols for cleaning and disinfecting contaminated work surfaces.
7. Install, inspect, and train workers on the use of emergency eye wash stations.
8. Workers must report all potential BBP exposures immediately, and follow post exposure protocols outlined in the exposure control plan.
9. Contaminated clothing should be removed immediately and properly laundered or disposed.
10. Facilities using sharps (devices with sharp points or edges), must evaluate with input from employees, and document all possible engineering controls - for example, needle safer devices.



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