

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

Facts on Bloodborne Pathogens from the Center for Disease Control (CDC):

- ☐ 70,000 new cases of hepatitis B are discovered every year
- ☐ Approximately 3 million people suffer from hepatitis C
- ☐ 500,000 incidents of bloodborne pathogens exposure occur annually
- ☐ Using needle-free technologies greatly diminishes risk of exposure
- ☐ Biohazard labels and materials are designated by an orange/red color coding

Symptoms for exposure to bloodborne pathogens include:

- ☐ For hepatitis B and hepatitis C, exposure is typically followed by mild flu-like symptoms, jaundice (yellowing of the skin), fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, stomach pain, and darkening of the urine.
- ☐ For HIV, symptoms include weakness, fever, sore throat, nausea, headaches, diarrhea, and flu-like reactions.
- ☐ As is the case with all three of these conditions, symptoms may appear and abate without warning and can lie dormant in the human body for years.

Work practice controls focus on the safest ways to perform exposure-related tasks. Here are some suggestions:

- ☐ Hand washing is one of the most important considerations and is an OSHA requirement if the risk of bloodborne pathogens exists or if potentially contaminated items are encountered inadvertently.
- ☐ Cleaning the faucet nozzle after washing your hands is a good follow-up procedure to prevent recontamination or the potential passing of pathogens to others.
- ☐ Areas of contamination (i.e. counter tops, floors, shelves, desktops, sinks, etc...) should be sanitized with bleach, or a similar disinfectant. Keyboards, due to the difficulty of cleaning and sanitizing, should be replaced if contaminated.
- ☐ Avoid handling needles, broken glass, or sharp objects that have blood or human tissue on them – use a brush and dust pan instead.
- ☐ Avoid placing any food items or drinks near the location of an exposure event.
- ☐ Workplace vaccinations are a good way to prevent your workforce from getting hepatitis B.

Best practices for disposal and handling of contaminated items are listed below. If you are unsure how to handle a situation, contact a health official, or the Center for Disease Control, with questions and inquiries.

- ☐ Options for disposal include taking materials to the hospital, using a burn barrel to incinerate items, or contacting a waste disposal business to have the contaminants removed from your facility.
- ☐ Ensure that hazard signs and puncture-proof disposal containers are available for use.
- ☐ Make appropriate PPE available to those who are responsible for disposal. PPE could include the use of gloves, a mask, safety glasses, an apron, a coat, or shoe sheaths.
- ☐ Keep a well-stocked first aid cabinet that includes a biohazard kit. Keep towels, bandages, and disinfectants available at all times.