

Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness

While bloodborne pathogens are not usually a major concern on a job site, it is still important that employees understand basic cautions and procedures in a first-aid situation. Knowing how to be safe around blood and other potentially infected material is important for your own health as well as that of your fellow employees.

Bloodborne Basics

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that are present in blood and can cause diseases. Some well-known examples of bloodborne pathogens include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and Hepatitis B and C. Bloodborne pathogens can be life-threatening.

Assume It's Infected

The simplest way to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens is to treat all blood as possibly infected. Even if you know a coworker very well, you should not assume that you are aware of whether they are carrying any bloodborne pathogens.

In order to prevent infection or spreading of bloodborne pathogens in the workplace, all employees should follow universal precautions, such as:

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, safety glasses or masks.
- Clean up any blood present in the workplace with chemicals or cleaning products that will adequately kill the microorganisms responsible for bloodborne pathogens.
- Store needles and other sharp objects that could pierce PPE or your skin inside FDA-approved sharps containers.
- Use warning labels for containers carrying regulated waste or sharp objects.

Caution Comes First

In the event that there is blood on the job site, only employees trained in first aid or designated to perform cleaning duties should address the situation. If you are involved in a situation involving blood or another potentially infectious material, do not attempt to help until you are certain that you are properly protected. First responders have to take care of themselves as well as those in need of assistance.

If you find that you have possibly been exposed to a bloodborne pathogen, wash the blood or other material off thoroughly with soap and warm water, and notify your supervisor. If blood or a potentially infected material gets inside your mouth, eyes, nose or your own broken skin, seek medical attention immediately.

