

Occupational Health Group is a service offered to the business community of North Alabama by Huntsville Hospital and Decatur General Hospital Systems

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure

by R. Michael Lowery M.D., M.P.H.



Blood-borne pathogen exposure occurs when employees come in contact with infectious material. Although rare, the resulting outcome of a positive seroconversion is severe enough to warrant an OSHA standard. Workers in many different occupations are at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens, including Hepatitis

B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS. Other bacteria and viruses are included under the blood-borne pathogens standard, however, the physical results of a positive conversion of these hazards is much less than that seen with Hepatitis B, C and HIV.

What is Included in the Standard?

The standard includes the following sections:

1. Scope and application of the standard: A general statement of coverage.
2. Definitions: Definitions of pertinent terms used in the standard (glossary).
3. Exposure Control: The requirements of the exposure control plan.
4. Methods of Compliance: Includes all requirements to meet the standard.
5. Hepatitis B Vaccination and Post-Exposure Evaluation and Follow up.
6. Communication of Hazards to Employees: Includes mandatory labels and signs, and information and training requirement.
7. Recordkeeping: This section outlines all recordkeeping requirements, including medical records, training records and storage requirements.
8. Declination: Appendix A of the standard is a form that must be signed by any employee electing not to receive the hepatitis B vaccine.

The standard requires the employer to use engineering and work practice controls as the primary means of eliminating or minimizing employee exposure. Engineering controls reduce employee exposure in the workplace by either removing/isolating the hazard or isolating the worker from exposure.

Work practice controls alter the manner in which a task is performed to make the task safer. When occupational exposure remains after using these controls, the employer must provide personal protective equipment appropriate for the task as additional protection.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- The employer must provide appropriate PPE at no cost to the employee. PPE must be cleaned, laundered, disposed

of, repaired or replaced at no cost to the employee.

- Clothing considered to be PPE and supplied by the employer must be removed prior to leaving the work area and placed in an appropriately designated container for storage, washing, decontamination or disposal. Under no circumstances is the employee to take contaminated personal protective equipment home.

The standard requires employers to ensure that the worksite is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. An appropriate written schedule should be kept. Cleaning and decontamination is based upon the type of surface to be cleaned and the type of soil present.

Training Requirements

The standard requires that the training be given at the educational level and in the language primarily used by the employees being trained. All training must take place during working hours, at no cost to the employee, and in a reasonable, accessible location. Training must be provided at the time of initial employment and at least annually after that or when job responsibilities change which could result in exposure to a blood-borne pathogen.

Determining whether or not an exposure has occurred to an employee is one of the more difficult decisions to be made by the employer. The blood-borne pathogen standard requires the use of universal precautions which requires that all bodily fluids be handled as if infected. It is impossible to determine if a hazard exists without thorough testing of the bodily fluid.

Unbroken skin forms an impervious barrier against bloodborne pathogens. However, infected blood can enter your system through any accidental puncture by a sharp object contaminated with the pathogen, open sores, cuts, abrasions, acne or any sort of damaged or broken skin, such as sunburn or blisters.

Bloodborne pathogens may also be transmitted through the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth. Indirect transmission occurs when a person touches dried or caked on blood and then touches the eyes, mouth, nose or an open wound.

Because of the potential severe health consequences of exposure, employers should be aggressive in the evaluation of the potential exposure. A good rule of thumb for employers is when in doubt, "refer them out".

New DOT Rules Come into Effect October 1, 2010

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has published final changes to 49 CFR Part 40 which take effect October 1, 2010. The following are mandatory changes to the DOT 5 panel test:

- Addition of screening for MDMA (Ecstasy)
- Addition of screening for 6-AM (Heroin)
- Lowering cut-off levels for Cocaine and Amphetamines

Insomuch as OHG "mirrors" its Non-Regulated drug screening on DOT, OHG will be changing its Non-Regulated 5, 7, and 10 panel SAMSHA Certified Lab drug screens to reflect this change.



A Message from the Director



As you are aware, Dr. R. Michael Lowery has been an integral part of Occupational Medicine in North Alabama, for the past 13 years. Dr. Lowery retired from his position at Occupational Health Group, effective August 3, 2010. It is my honor to congratulate him and wish him well.

areas of specialty are Ergonomics, Disability Evaluations, Impairment Ratings, and performance as a Medical Review Officer for workplace drug and alcohol testing services.

Dr. Lowery has been instrumental in the evolution of occupational medicine service in North Alabama. His intelligence, quick wit and inestimable humor will be greatly missed by all of us who have worked with Dr. Lowery in these last few years.

Dr. Lowery, a native of Speake, Alabama, received his undergraduate degree from the University of Alabama-Birmingham in 1974, a post-graduate degree from the University of Alabama-Huntsville in 1976, and his medical degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine in 1980. After medical school, he completed a three-year residency in Family Practice at the University of Alabama-Huntsville. He then went on to earn his Masters in Public Health from the University of Michigan in 1987. He joined OHG in 1996 after serving as Medical Director at Saginaw of General Motors in Athens, Alabama. Dr. Lowery's primary

It has been a pleasure to work with a gentleman of his caliber and expertise. I know that you will want to join me in wishing him good health and prosperity as he enters this new phase of his life.

Sincerely,

John Reynolds
Director

Flu News

Influenza is one of the leading causes of absenteeism from work. Unlike the common cold, the flu can leave a person unable to function for several days - a problem that plagues many companies across North Alabama. On average, unscheduled absences cost U.S. employers \$602 for every employee annually, and according to trends, these expenses are only expected to increase in the coming years.

The cost per employee for on-site vaccination is:

Over 500 participants	\$21.00
301- 500 participants	\$22.00
101-300 participants	\$23.00
51 -100 participants	\$24.00
25 - 50 participants	\$25.00

Looking for a solution? Through OHG's On-Site Wellness Services Department, businesses have a unique opportunity to sponsor a flu clinic tailored specifically to the needs of their employees and organization. OHG's On-Site Flu Vaccination Program can reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, improve workplace morale, and cut medical costs, for the employer and employee. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is reporting that U.S. businesses could save \$12 billion annually through proactive flu shot campaigns and other wellness services.

If you expect less than 25 participants, you may send your employees to any of our OHG Clinics. The cost at the clinic is \$25.00 per person. We will administer vaccinations on-site and at our clinics starting October 11th and continuing through November and December. To find out how to develop a program that's customized to meet your specific needs, contact OHG Wellness Services at 256-922-6699.

OHG Directory

Administration.....	(256) 922-6675
Marketing and Business Development.....	(256) 922-6677
Billing Department.....	(256) 922-6673
OHG - Huntsville.....	(256) 265-7000
OHG - Madison.....	(256) 774-7300
OHG - Decatur.....	(256) 353-4325
Wellness Services.....	(256) 922-6699

www.OHGonline.org

Holiday Closings

All OHG clinics will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Thanksgiving	November 25th & 26th
Christmas	December 24th
New Year's	December 31st



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