

SECTION 28 - HEALTH AND SAFETY

I. INTRODUCTION

The following safety procedures will help limit the risk of exposure to infectious disease. Shelby County Coroner's Office personnel may be concerned with contracting an illness from an individual who may have died with or from a contagious disease. Although dead bodies are a potential source of infection, they are less so than the living infected person. A living infected person provides a continuing living source for the infection and may actively shed a virus or bacteria through coughing and sneezing or through their body secretions and excretions. The dead person, on the other hand, merely serves as a repository for the organism. Since infections are caused by living organisms which are not mobile, it is nearly impossible to contract an infectious disease by merely being around an infected dead body or in the same room with one.

However, Deputy Coroners often must come into direct contact with dead bodies during death pronouncements, external examinations or assisting with transportation. In these instances, a small potential of being infected from the body exists. The potential can be reduced by the use of reasonable precautions.

Examination of the body will often require the removal of items from pockets. The C/DC should not reach into pockets or beneath the body where visibility is limited. Pockets should be carefully pulled inside out to expose any items they may contain. Uncapped sharps should be photographed and removed from the scene and placed into a safety container for disposal or into an evidence container. Uncapped sharps should never be transported inside of the body bag.

II. TRAINING

All new Deputy Coroners must attend training coordinated by the Shelby County Coroner's Office. Safety training sessions include lectures and/or discussions of health and safety issues and guidelines.

III. EMPLOYEE HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

HEPA and HEP B INOCULATIONS are not required, but highly recommended for employment as a Deputy Coroner. This is a series of three injections over a six-month period. This vaccine provides over 90% protection against Hepatitis B for 7 or more years following vaccination. The vaccine is to be administered at 0, 1, and 6-month intervals.

PPD (Tuberculosis skin test) - The PPD is not required, but recommended for all health care workers on an annual basis. This test is performed with a review of the results in 48 hours. Individuals who show a positive will be required to have an x-ray to evaluate the results. Individuals who have had a positive in the past cannot be tested again.

HIV BASELINE - This test is not a requirement of employment.

III. DECEDENT WITH KNOWN/PROBABLE CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

1. C/DC shall notify AL Department of Public Health of the death and disease.
2. C/DC shall notify funeral home to the decedents disease.

IV. POTENTIAL EXPOSURES

The following are all investigative personnel tasks that offer potential for exposure to infectious disease:

1. Scene Investigation
2. Handling bodies, blood, fluids, tissues or contaminated personal property accompanying bodies
3. External Examinations

ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE

In the case of an exposure to a first responder, law enforcement, or on-scene personnel the C/DC may be requested to draw a blood sample for testing for blood-borne pathogens. If the body is to be sent for autopsy the request should be communicated to ALDFS. The release of results from such blood work to the health officer for the exposed employee is covered under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA, 45 CFR §164.512(b)(1)(v), *Uses and disclosure for which an authorization or opportunity to agree or object is not required.*

V. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):

When the C/DC is participating in any type of postmortem examination, conducting a scene investigation in which there are large amounts of blood and body fluids present, full PPE is required including: protective gloves, plastic apron, surgical mask, shoe covers, over sleeves and protective eyewear must be worn for the duration of the examination and until the scene investigation is complete. When handling personal property accompanying bodies or items of property from the body or scene, and processing toxicology samples, and conducting scene investigations that are clean (no blood or body fluids visible), protective gloves are required.

SCENE INVESTIGATIONS:

The C/DC will encounter an extremely diverse range of potential scene situations. The C/DC should access each scene prior to entry to determine the assumption of contamination that exists. Whenever the possibility for exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids exists, the appropriate protection must be worn.

1. A natural home death where there is no blood or body fluids present:
 - a. The C/DC must wear protective gloves at a minimum.
2. A contaminated scene:
 - a. A contaminated scene may be a homicide, suicide or motor vehicle collision where large amounts of blood and body fluids are present.
 - b. The C/DC must wear protective gloves, plastic apron, protective shoe covers, over sleeves and a mask.
 - c. These items are to be changed if torn or soiled and always be removed prior to leaving the scene.
 - d. While wearing gloves, avoid handling personal items, such as combs and pens that could become soiled or contaminated.

- e. Face masks and eye protection are required if potential exposure to blood via a splash to the face, mouth, nose or eyes exists.
 - f. Where there is massive blood contamination on floors, the use of disposable impervious shoe coverings must be worn.
 - g. Protective gloves are to be worn to remove contaminated protective gear.
 - h. All protective gear must be removed prior to leaving a scene and placed in biohazard bags and disposed of properly.
 - i. Biohazard bags will be provided for the disposal of contaminated items.
3. Handling bodies, blood, fluids and tissues or contaminated personal property accompanying bodies:
- a. The C/DC must wear gloves and cover all cuts and abrasions to create a barrier when handling bodies, blood, fluids, tissues or contaminated personal property.
 - b. If a glove becomes torn it must be immediately replaced.
 - c. Carefully wash all exposed areas with disinfectant soap after any contact with blood.
 - d. During loading, unloading and bagging of bodies, the C/DC must wear gloves. e. All paperwork processed at the scene must be managed without gloves or with fresh gloves.
 - f. The outside of the body bag must be cleaned with disinfectant soap if contaminated with blood.
 - g. If the C/DC is bagging a "known" infectious disease body (one that has been medically documented), do not write "Infectious Disease" on the body bag. Rather, verbally inform the transporter or the mortuary/funeral home personnel that this is a "known" infectious disease case and indicate the same on the Release Form

DISPOSAL OF WASTES:

Waste generated while performing job tasks on cases where there is no contamination of the materials with biological waste matter can generally be double bagged, sealed and dumped in the regular trash for pick up. *The exception to this is glass waste only. All glass must be discarded in "GLASS TRASH" containers that are appropriately marked.*

Waste generated while performing investigative tasks on cases that become contaminated with biological materials must be disposed of in the following manners:

1. Trash - all trash, normal waste generated during a case that becomes contaminated with biological fluids is to be discarded in trash containers marked "Infectious Waste".

2. Sharps - all sharps, contaminated or not, are discarded in labeled "SHARPS" containers
3. Glass - glass that is contaminated with biological matter must be disinfected and placed in appropriately labeled "GLASS TRASH" containers.
4. Biological - all biological wastes must be double bagged.
5. Receptacles for the above may be found at the SCCO office.
6. The C/DC should never have to incinerate tissues since tissues collected at the scene will go to the Shelby County Coroner's Office or will be released to the mortuary/funeral home.

DISINFECTING EQUIPMENT:

1. For washable surfaces - first wash excess soil from the equipment then apply one of the following solutions liberally over all surfaces: 70% ethyl alcohol, 70% isopropyl alcohol or 10% household bleach. 10% household bleach is made by mixing 1 part bleach and 9 parts water.
2. For small items: Soaking the item for 20 minutes in a disinfectant solution ensures complete surface contact. All surfaces must be thoroughly rinsed afterward, especially if the bleach solution is used.
3. For clothing: Rinse out excess soil and then soak in 10% household bleach for 20 minutes. Then wash normally. CAUTION: Bleach may fade colors. Check for color fastness first.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES:

The following equipment/supplies shall be issued to and maintained by the C/DC:

1. Eye protection
2. Over sleeves
3. Sharps container
4. Gloves
5. Shoe covers
6. N95 masks
7. Biohazard Bags

VI. PROTOCOL FOR BODY FLUID EXPOSURE

DEFINITION:

Any exposure to body fluids from another person that is compounded by a cut, needle or other sharps puncture, or a splash to mucous membranes (eyes, mouth, etc.)

IMMEDIATE PROCEDURES:

1. Contamination by injury: Stop the activity/task, remove gloves, and wash out the injury. The wound should be flushed for at least 3 minutes with water and then washed with disinfectant soap and betadine.
2. Contamination without injury: Immediately disengage from the activity, remove gloves, and wash the contaminated areas(s) with water and disinfectant. The investigator may then return to normal duties.

REPORTING THE EXPOSURE:

Shelby County Coroner's Office personnel must follow procedures outlined in the Shelby County Human resources Policies and Procedures Manual.

1. Report the exposure to your supervisor (usually the Coroner) immediately. The C/DC/Investigator will be directed on steps to follow.
2. The supervisor will notify the proper county personnel regarding the exposure. Paperwork will need to be completed by all parties including witnesses, if any.
3. If possible; obtain a blood sample from the donor for screening.

NON-Shelby County Coroner's Office personnel:

1. In cases where NON-Shelby County Coroner's Office personnel are involved in potential exposure, the person exposed must take responsibility to seek medical care as soon as possible.
2. The Shelby County Coroner's Office will assist in providing screening information from the donor.