

## Health and Safety

Created 9/30/2010  
Revised 10/31/2023

### Purpose

To identify and limit the risk of exposure to infectious diseases, workplace injuries and potential exposures to biohazards and chemicals.

### Policy

██████ 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, ██████ staff often must come into direct contact with dead bodies during death pronouncements, autopsy and external examinations, or assisting with transportation. In these instances, there is a small potential of becoming infected from the body through aerosolized infectious particles, surface contact, or bloodborne transmission. The potential can be reduced by the use of reasonable precautions. The ██████ will comply with CDC-issued guidance for healthcare and deathcare workers involved in the postmortem care of decedents with potential infectious diseases, as well as local and state health department infection control requirements.

## Procedures

### Training

All new ██████ personnel must attend safety training sessions. These sessions shall include lectures and discussions on health and safety issues, as well as guidelines. All staff must have an annual refresher including review of federal or state regulations and completion of blood borne pathogen quiz.

### Employee Health Requirements:


Hepatitis B (HEPAVAX) inoculations are required for employment as an ██████ employee. The ██████ through the ██████ health care provider, offers this immunization to employees who do not already have the vaccination.

Tuberculosis skin testing (PPD) is mandatory for all ██████ staff members on an annual basis. This test is performed by the county's health care provider, with a review of the results in 48 hours. Individuals who have a positive result will be required to receive follow-up medical care as directed by the worker's compensation designated physician. Individuals who have had a positive test result in the past cannot be tested again.

Annual influenza vaccines and emerging pathogen vaccinations (i.e. COVID-19) are currently not required however are strongly recommended for the purposes of staff health and safety and continuity of operations.

Baseline HIV or HCV testing are not required for employment.






---

### Required Protective Equipment:

SCENE INVESTIGATIONS can call for a wide range of personal protective equipment depending on the scene itself.

A CLEAN SCENE where no blood or bodily fluids are present the medical investigator must wear protective gloves at a minimum.

A CONTAMINATED SCENE where large amounts of blood and bodily fluids are present the medical investigator must wear protective gloves, protective shoe covers, and a mask with eye protection if there is a potential exposure to blood via a splash to the face, mouth, nose, or eyes. Extra biohazard bags should be stored in the response vehicle to dispose of contaminated protective gear.

AN EXTERNAL EXAM OR AUTOPSY requires the same level of protection for all  staff members performing/assisting in the examination. Staff members must wear scrubs that are to be laundered at the facility, protective gloves, apron, cover sleeves, foot covers, respiratory mask, and eye protection.

### Preventing Exposure:

When handling SHARPS, whether equipment, evidence or other articles, every care must be made to prevent puncturing the skin. If such an exposure occurs, disengage from the task immediately and scrub the wound with disinfectant soap and warm water. The office administrator must be notified immediately and medical follow up will be scheduled through the county's risk management medical provider.

NEEDLE STICK injuries commonly occur while recapping or removing the needle from the syringe. To prevent needle stick injuries, needles should not be purposely bent or broken by hand, or otherwise manipulated by hand. Extreme care should be taken when recapping a needle and a one hand technique should be utilized at all times. After the use of a needle, or any sharp object, they shall be placed in a puncture-resistant container for disposal; the puncture-resistant containers should be located as close as practical to the use area. The puncture-proof container must clearly be labeled: "DANGER SHARPS."

### Disposal of Wastes:

NONCONTAMINATED TRASH is trash that is generated while performing job tasks on cases where there is no contamination of the materials with biological waste; this trash can generally be disposed of in the regular trash for pick up. The exception to this is glass or other sharp articles. All glass/sharps shall be discarded in sharps containers that are appropriately marked.

CONTAMINATED TRASH is trash that is generated during a case that becomes contaminated with biological fluids and is to be discarded in trash containers marked "Biohazard Waste." Any contaminated item that is considered a sharps shall be discarded in a properly labeled puncture-proof container.

MEDICATION WASTE is prescription and over the counter medications that have been collected during the course of an investigation and is to be discarded as detailed in the Prescription and Illicit Drug section of this procedure manual.

### Disinfecting Equipment:



[REDACTED]

---

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. For small items, soaking for 20 minutes in a disinfectant solution ensures complete surface contact. All surfaces must be thoroughly rinsed afterwards, especially if the bleach solution is used. A virucidal wash is also to be applied to all autopsy suite surfaces at the completion of each workday when autopsies are performed.

**Body Fluid Exposure:**

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.

CONTAMINATED BY INJURY- Stop the activity, remove gloves, and wash out the injury. The wound should be flushed for three (3) minutes with water, then wash with disinfectant soap and betadine. Immediately notify the office administrator and schedule an appointment with the risk management health provider.

CONTAMINATION WITHOUT INJURY- Stop the activity, remove gloves, and wash the contaminated area(s) with water and disinfectant. The staff member may then return to normal activities.

**Chemical Exposures:**

There is a risk of being exposed to a myriad number of hazardous chemicals, all having varying acute and chronic health effects. For specific chemical exposures, please refer to the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) posted within the autopsy suite, histology laboratory, body receiving area or the front office. Some of these chemicals may be systemic toxins, carcinogens, reproductive toxicants, neurological toxicants, sensitizers, immunological agents, dermatopathic agents, pneumoconiotic agents, or asthmagens. All staff members shall familiarize themselves with the location of the showers and eye wash stations. All staff members shall also receive a proper fit testing for a N95 disposable respirator.

**Seeking Medical Attention:**

The County has designated primary care physicians who will direct all medical care for injured employees [REDACTED]. Employees should not seek care from other providers unless it is an emergency. Updated designated provider lists are provided by the department of risk management.

**Repetitive Motion Injuries**

As technology plays an increasingly important role in the workplace, more workers sit for a larger part of the day to perform their normal job functions. Due to that circumstance, among others, many employers have begun to experience a rise in repetitive motion workers' compensation claims.

Some medical professionals believe that most of these cases are attributable to the changing nature of office work, the aging and increased diversity of the work force, and the sedentary nature of current work and life styles. Lifestyle and hobbies may also contribute to the problem.

---

Computer based tasks are one of the causes of repetitive motion injuries. Computers enable workers to key faster than they could on a typewriter and for longer uninterrupted periods. Additionally, computers offer fewer chances to alternate activities and/or postures.

Prevention is the most cost effective method for controlling these exposures and costs far less than treating the disease. This is particularly true in light of the fact that the Departments' workers' compensation charges are based on experience, so if your Department has many claims you pay a larger share of premium to the County's workers' compensation fund.

**Recommendation:** Analyze your office environment. If you find that you are uncomfortable or developing pain that you attribute to work, contact the Risk Manager or the Safety & Workers' Compensation Administrator to schedule an ergonomic evaluation of your work area. Often minor changes can make a difference. Plan to attend an ergonomics class. These classes are offered throughout the County several times a year. Take advantage of the stretching software program *Stretchware* that is available on all County computers. It can be scheduled to remind you to stretch throughout the day. Employees can develop work habits that are consistent with good ergonomic principles and can learn how to recognize early symptoms before they need medical treatment. Report early symptoms, including tingling and numbness in the fingers, loss of muscle and grip strength.

When completing physical tasks during the performance of your job, it is of the utmost importance to follow proper lifting technique. Additionally, for heavy objects or when moving a decedent, assistance should be given by another staff member or by other trained individuals if on a death scene.

### **Policy/Procedure Violations**

Violations of this policy are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Revised Effective:** 10/10/2015

**Revised Effective:** 10/24/2017

**Revised Effective:** 09/28/2019

**Revised Effective:** 10/12/2021

**Revised Effective:** 10/31/2023

**Approved by:**