

Bloodborne Pathogens: An Overview

5-Minute Talk

Overview of topic

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms present in human blood which can cause disease in humans, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard requires the employer to prepare a written exposure control program. The standard mandates that the plan evaluate routine tasks and procedures in the workplace that involve occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials; identify workers performing such tasks; and use a variety of methods to reduce the risks.

Infectious materials

Under the OSHA regulation, blood means human blood, blood products, or blood components. "Other potentially infectious materials" (OPIM) include human body fluids such as semen; vaginal secretions; cerebrospinal, synovial, pleural, pericardial, peritoneal, and amniotic fluids; saliva in dental procedures; any body fluids visibly contaminated with blood; unfixed human tissues or organs; and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids. OPIM also includes HIV-containing cell or tissue cultures, organ cultures, and HIV- or HBV-containing culture medium or other solutions. Moreover, blood, organs, or other tissues from experimental animals infected with HIV or HBV are considered OPIM.

Occupational exposure

All persons with a potential for exposure must be provided with adequate training and information including general explanations of the modes of transmission, symptoms, epidemiology, warning signals related to general exposure, and procedures to follow if an exposure incident occurs.

Occupational exposure means a "reasonably anticipated skin, eye, mucous membrane, or parenteral contact with blood or OPIM that may result from the performance of the employee's duties."



Employee training

Training must include appropriate methods for recognizing tasks that may involve exposure to blood or OPIM and the use and limitations of practices that would reduce exposure, including engineering controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment.

Training sessions must be comprehensive, conducted by a person knowledgeable in the subject matter, and provide an opportunity for a question and answer period.

Training tips

Review the requirements of 29 CFR 1910.1030. You may wish to choose one topic and prepare a 5 minute “review” session or prepare a comprehensive training program containing all of the required topics. Training topics should include:

- An accessible copy and explanation of §1910.1030. Tell the employees where the copy is kept;
- A general explanation of the epidemiology and symptoms of bloodborne diseases;
- An explanation of the modes of transmission of bloodborne pathogens;
- An explanation of the written exposure control plan and how to get a copy;
- An explanation of how to recognize events that may involve exposure to blood and OPIM;
- An explanation of types, selection, proper use, location, removal, handling, decontamination, and disposal of personal protective equipment;
- An explanation of the use and limitations of safe work practices, engineering controls, and personal protective equipment;
- Information on hepatitis B vaccination, such as safety, benefits, efficacy, and administration method, and availability free of charge;
- Information on the actions to take and persons to contact in an emergency involving blood or OPIM;
- An explanation of the procedures to follow if an exposure incident occurs, including methods of reporting and the medical follow-up that will be made available;
- Information on post exposure evaluation and follow up;
- An explanation of information on the warning signs, labels, and color coding; and
- An opportunity for interactive questions and answers with the person conducting the training session.

Where to go for more information

29 CFR 1910.1030—Bloodborne pathogens

