

Safe Handling of Sharps & Bloodborne Pathogens

Law enforcement personnel are at greater risk of bloodborne pathogens (BBP) than most due to their numerous interactions with the public during drug arrests and searches of people, belongings, and vehicles. Due to this large workplace injury exposure, NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, recently issued a fact sheet with tips on limiting exposure and preventing injury.



Any municipal employee who has the potential to sustain a needle stick should review this fact sheet. This might include cleaners, custodians, healthcare workers, social workers, and highway employees. We have often discussed how highway and public works staff can clean roadways, remove brush, or handle trash where needles may be present. Please use extreme caution under these conditions and protect the hands from a potential puncture-type injury in which blood contaminated with a BBP may enter an employee's bloodstream.

As the fact sheet points out, it is important to remember a few things whenever an employee is exposed to a potential BBP:

- Before exposure, use PPE where appropriate
- Complete annual BBP training
- Know-how of disposing of sharps, such as needles, properly
- Post-injury procedures
- Report all incidents

In addition to hand protection and other safety measures mentioned in the fact sheet, ensure annual training for all employees potentially exposed to a BBP is completed. This includes not only police, fire, and EMS, but also all staff who might administer first aid to someone or treat a paper cut or nosebleed. These are all examples of bloodborne pathogen exposures, and staff need to train on them, including protective measures to reduce contamination.

Comp Alliance trains on BBP every Monday at 10:00, along with Workplace Violence Prevention and Right-to-Know, per NYS requirements. If you would like to attend one of these virtual sessions, please reach out to our Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com.

Resource: [NIOSH Sharps Fact Sheet](#)