

SAFETY

AND THE SUPERVISOR

STRATEGIES & SOLUTIONS FOR THE SAFETY CONSCIOUS ORGANIZATION

Needlesticks

Safety Meeting Presentation

Needlesticks: Not Just A Hospital Concern

Although we are not a health care provider, you still need to be concerned with the possibility of accidentally getting stuck with a needle. Needles are everywhere. They could be in the trash or in someone's desk drawer. Get stuck just once, and you could wind up with a deadly bloodborne disease.

Most places that use needles every day, such as hospitals, clinics and dental offices, have to follow strict guidelines on disposing of them. They use special sharps containers that minimize the risk of their workers or anyone else accidentally catching a needle in the finger or the arm.

Companies are doing this because the risk of someone contracting a serious disease this way is high. Many serious diseases are transmitted through contact with blood. These are called bloodborne diseases. You have heard of HIV. This is just one kind of bloodborne disease. It gets a lot of attention in the media because of its deadly consequences, but there are other bloodborne diseases that can also make you seriously ill or even kill you. Hepatitis is just one of them.

What Is Your Risk?

If we have an area such as a workplace clinic that uses needles as a part of medical care, we follow strict guidelines to make sure there is no danger of getting stuck. You should know what our sharps containers look like and where they are positioned. You should also know not to touch them unless you have had training.

Chances are, unless you work in one of these areas, you will never even see these containers. Do not make the mistake of assuming there is nothing to worry about because needles are not common workplace items here. Putting your hand into the trash is just one way you could unexpectedly come into contact with a needle.

The garbage can be full of dangerous things. Broken glass, sharp edges on cans or

even corrosive liquids are just a few possibilities. A misplaced needle is also possible. Someone who uses intravenous drugs may have discarded a used needle into the trash.

Hopefully, none of our workers fall into this category, but if we have any kind of contact with the public, the risk is always there - especially with the trash receptacle outside our building.

This is why it's important that you never reach into a trash bin. If you inadvertently drop something into one, don't put your hand in to retrieve the item. Instead, try getting a coat hanger or something else you can use to fish out the object.

If you are responsible for emptying the trash, you should know the risk of coming into contact with a needle and take appropriate precautions. The most common is to always use glove when changing trash bin liners. This will help minimize, but not eliminate, the danger.

Take More Precautions

Washing your hands is always a good idea, but it is especially important after handling any kind of garbage. Consider this. If you had reached your hand into a trash bin and had avoided getting stuck by a needle, it is possible you may have touched something contaminated with blood. It is the blood on a needle that can transfer the disease. The needle just gives it an entry point. If you have touched the blood, it could work its way into an open wound. Washing your hands thoroughly will help reduce this risk.

If you ever see a needle lying on the floor, do not pick it up. You might think there's little danger, but remember that skilled healthcare professionals use totally needleless systems to avoid the possibility of getting stuck. If these professionals are not confident that they can always avoid a needlestick, you shouldn't be either. Instead of picking it up, notify your supervisor.

Thanks for your attention.

Have a safe day.