

Wales Center Volunteer Fire Co., Inc.

Standard Operating Procedure: Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are disease causing micro-organisms present in human blood. The most obvious exposure is through contact with patients. Less obvious, but just as dangerous is exposure through contact with contaminated equipment, as in carrying a patient on a backboard with bloody straps. Even less obvious a threat is contaminated debris from a vehicle at an accident scene.

As firefighters, we have the likelihood of exposure to these potentially infectious materials and must treat all human blood and body fluids as if known to be infectious (Universal Precautions). We must be aware of the dangers to know how to protect ourselves from them.

1. All firefighters have the potential for exposure to bloodborne pathogens and will receive training to minimize that risk.
2. All firefighters are encouraged to receive, at no cost to them, Hepatitis B vaccinations.
3. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) will be worn, not only for patient care, but whenever the potential for exposure exists (clean-up, decontamination, etc.). PPE will range from gloves alone to facemask, gown and gloves. PPE is found in limited amounts in First Aid kits and in abundance in the ambulance. It must be replaced when contaminated or damaged.
4. Hand washing is the single most important infection control procedure. Wash hands as soon as possible after patient contact, any exposure and after removing gloves. Antiseptic towelettes are an acceptable interim action if hand washing facilities are not immediately available.
5. If mucous membranes (eyes, mouth, etc.) are exposed, flush with water. Report any type of exposure to the Infection Control Officer (ICO). There is paperwork to be filled out and a determination must be made as to the significance of the exposure.
6. Whenever possible, use disposable equipment (ex. cardboard splints). Most reusable equipment left at hospitals will be cleaned and disinfected (and tagged as such), before being returned. Contaminated reusable equipment must be cleaned and disinfected or removed from service. To clean: wash with soap and water, then disinfect with a solution of 1 part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water. To remove from service: place in a plastic bag (not red) with a biohazard label and notify an ICO.
7. The ambulance must be cleaned and disinfected immediately after exposure to potentially contaminated body fluids. Cleaning supplies are kept under the bench seat. Appropriate PPE will be worn and the trash generated will be disposed of properly. Use the same cleaning procedure as in #6.
8. All potentially contaminated linens and trash must be deposited in appropriate containers at hospitals. Trash goes in red bags, linens do not. Potentially contaminated trash must not be left at scenes. Empty trash containers on each transport.
9. Contaminated turnout gear and personal clothing will not be taken home. It will be laundered by the ICO.

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