

Toolbox Talks 2

083: Unsafe Conditions: Bloodborne Pathogens

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review any company policies related to handling, containment, and disposal of blood or other biological waste. Your company probably has an *Exposure Control Plan*.

What this Safety Talk covers:

This Safety Talk addresses unsafe conditions that involve blood.

Discussion notes:

Background

Our talk on unsafe *acts* involving bloodborne pathogens addresses the fact that the dangers include contracting Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, and Viral Hemorrhagic Fever. Any of these can do massive damage to the body's various systems and organs. Any of them can result in a slow, painful death. People may be carriers of these pathogens and not even know it. You can't always avoid unsafe *conditions*, so you need to know what to do when those conditions exist. Always report a blood incident.

Unsafe conditions involving blood

- No biohazard kit on site. Report this to your foreman, preferably before it's needed.
- No biohazard waste containers on site. Report this to your foreman.
- Blood cleanup procedures not readily available. Where there's a bio hazard kit, there should be easy-to-follow instructions on how to clean up the bio hazard.
- Bleeding coworker. People don't always notice a cut. If you see bleeding, escort the bleeding person to the biohazard kit location.
- Blood of known origin in work area. Report it. If there's not a designated blood cleanup person, obtain the PPE and clean it up.
- Blood of unknown origin in work area. Don't disturb it until your foreman can determine what to do.
- Blood-contaminated items in an unapproved container. Report this to your foreman. Don't move the items unless instructed to.

Report these behavior problems directly to the nearest authority:

- Bleeding person refusing treatment. Anyone doing this might endanger everyone.
- Bleeding person in a blind panic. Stay out of this person's way, unless there's an immediate threat to the person's life. Get help.
- People treat blood cleanup like normal spill cleanup, even after you point out this is unsafe. That includes such acts as tossing bloodied items into the normal trash, not using the PPE, and not following the established procedures.
- People use biohazard waste containers for normal trash. This adds unnecessary burden to the bio waste handling system.
- People carelessly attend to a blood release in a manner that promotes the spreading of droplets (e.g., spraying, splashing).
- People refuse to wash hands and face after a blood exposure event.

Review and discussion

1. Are blood pathogens a problem to take seriously? Why?

2. If there's a blood incident, what should you always do? Why do you think this requirement makes sense?
3. If there's no bio kit on site or no bio waste container on site, what should you do?
4. If you see blood dripping from a coworker's elbow, what should you do?
5. What if a bleeding coworker shrugs off a cut and refuses treatment? *[Note to Presenter: By "coworker," we mean any other person working on that site. It doesn't matter if that person works for another company or what company that is. This behavior can carry life-ending consequences.]*
6. What should you do about the blood a coworker drips onto the floor after getting cut?
7. If you find blood in your work area, but have no idea where it came from, what should you do? *[Note to Presenter: If we know the blood came from Bob, we can have Bob tested if someone is exposed to his blood. If we don't know where the blood came from, then the testing process is more complicated. We can also determine if Bob is a high-risk individual, but we can't determine that about an unknown person.]*
8. Suppose you enter the washroom and see that someone apparently tried to treat a cut in there. There's diluted blood all over one sink and there are bloody paper towels in the trash. What should you do?
9. You watch, horrified, as a man loses several fingers in an accident with a portable saw. But now he's screaming and violently flinging his bloody hand around in pain. What should you do?
10. One of the drywallers cut his hand somehow and you walked him over to the First Aid room. His foreman walked in, and didn't even bother to look for the biohazard kit. Instead, the foreman swabbed at the cut with paper towels and threw those into a nearby wastebasket. What should your response be? *[Note to Presenter: This foreman should know better. Speak up and remind him or her that this is bio-waste. If that doesn't result in an immediate apology and corrective action, leave. Report the problem to an authority immediately.]*

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.