



Safety News

ISSUE ONE, 2008

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

Learn The ABC's Of Hepatitis

Hepatitis is a disorder in which a viruses causes inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis varies in severity from a self-limited condition with total recovery to a life-threatening or life-long disease. The three most common types of hepatitis infections in the U.S. are hepatitis A, B or C.

The Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is considered the least threatening since it generally does not lead to liver damage and 99% of those infected fully recover within a few weeks or months. Feces-contaminated water and food are the major sources of infection, but infected people and contaminated needles can also transmit the virus. Those occupations at risk for being infected or passing on the infection include workers in day care, health care, the food industry, international travelers, and sewage workers. There are vaccines that can protect against HAV.

The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a serious viral disease that attacks the liver. It is transmitted through contact with infected blood and body fluids. Although it is treatable, those who are exposed to blood in their work, such as health care workers, laboratory technicians, dentists, surgeons, nurses, emergency service workers,

police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, prison or military personnel or those who live with an infected individual should be vaccinated against HBV.

The Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is the most common chronic bloodborne infection and leading cause of liver transplants in the U.S. It too is

transmitted by contact with infected blood and body fluids and can be treated, but there is no vaccine to protect against it. Workers who may come in contact with blood or body fluids should be taught the health risks and how to prevent blood-borne infections, including standard barrier precautions and engineering controls to prevent exposure to blood.

Most people who get Hepatitis B or C have no recognizable signs or symptoms, yet the virus can lead to serious, permanent liver damage or cancer. The only way these viruses can be positively identified is through blood tests or blood screenings. Hepatitis can be avoided, but if you think you have hepatitis or have been in contact with an infected person or a contaminated object, see your doctor immediately. □



In This Issue

Feature Articles

Learn The ABC's of Hepatitis

The Expert's Corner –
Natural Rubber Latex –
A Workplace Allergen

Spread Only The Facts
About MRSA

Exhausted From Diesel
Exposure?

Improve Safety With
Attitude

Safety Topic –
Safety Lifting
Techniques

In Each Issue

Employer Education Series
Reporting Injuries

STATE
COMPENSATION
INSURANCE
FUND

The Expert's Corner

Natural Rubber Latex – A Workplace Allergen

Natural rubber latex is found in a wide variety of products. Balloons, rubber bands, and bandages typically contain latex rubber. In the workplace, it is most commonly found in latex gloves. Many medical devices also contain latex.

The proteins in latex are allergens. Most people who encounter latex in consumer products do not develop an allergy to latex, but some workers are at risk. Those with regular exposure to latex gloves and other products containing latex may develop an allergic reaction. The more frequent the exposure, the greater the risk. Workers with other allergic conditions (such as hay fever) are at increased risk. Latex allergy can be associated with allergies to certain foods, such as avocado, potato, banana, tomato, chestnuts, kiwi fruit, and papaya.

Symptoms of latex allergy include...

skin rashes, hives, flushing, and itching
nasal, eye, or sinus symptoms,
shortness of breath, wheezing, or asthma
shock (rarely).

Symptoms can begin within minutes of exposure, or they can be substantially delayed. These symptoms can be serious, even life-threatening.



Routes of exposure include skin contact and inhalation. Inhalation occurs when latex proteins attach themselves to the powder used in some gloves and become airborne. This is especially a problem when changing gloves.

Dermatitis from other causes besides latex allergy can occur in glove wearers. Irritant

contact dermatitis is a nonallergic reaction to the gloves or powder. Chemical sensitivity dermatitis is a reaction to one or more of the many chemicals added to latex during processing and manufacturing.

To prevent latex allergy, use latex-free gloves. If this is not possible, choose powder-free latex gloves with reduced-protein content. Wash hands with mild soap and water and dry thoroughly after removing gloves. Once a worker becomes allergic to latex, special precautions are needed to prevent exposures during work as well as during medical or dental care.

For more information on latex allergy and its prevention, visit the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) website at www.cdc.gov. □

Heather Borman, MS, CIH, CSP is a State Fund Associate Industrial Hygienist.

Spread Only The Facts About MRSA

Staphylococcus aureus or “staph,” is the scientific name for common bacteria that many people carry on their skin, in their nasal passages, or under their fingernails without being aware of it. Common staph bacteria are the cause of many minor skin infections most of which heal on their own or can be treated with antibiotics. Hospital environments have dealt with antibiotic-resistant staph bacteria for many years. However, in the 1990s a slightly different strain of staph (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus

also known as MRSA or CA-MRSA) began to appear in the wider community. While MRSA can usually be treated, it's important to know how it's transmitted, who is at greatest risk, how to prevent contracting it, how to identify an infection, and what to do if you suspect you have MRSA.

MRSA is not airborne. It's primarily spread by direct skin-to-skin human contact or contact with an infected wound or skin opening such as a cut or abrasion. But, it can also be spread

by contact with contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, or poor hygiene. Healthy people can have MRSA with no symptoms, but, they can pass it on - with serious and sometimes fatal consequences - to vulnerable persons like the very young or old, persons with weakened immune systems, those with other medical problems, or those who get the bacteria into their bloodstream. The best protection against contracting

Continued on next page

Exhausted From Diesel Exposure?

Diesel exhaust is made up of harmful chemicals including very small toxic particles and hazardous gases. Breathing diesel exhaust is the most common method of exposure. Exposure to diesel exhaust for short periods of time may cause headaches, nausea, chest tightness, wheezing, cough and irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat. Exposure over long periods of time (usually years) may increase the chances of getting cancer. Those who already have respiratory illnesses, such as bronchitis, emphysema and/or asthma, may be adversely affected if they are exposed to long-term, or chronic exposure to diesel exhaust.



If you work around diesel-fueled vehicles and equipment, you can control or eliminate exposure to potentially harmful exhaust fumes by: substitution, ventilation, and/or adopting safe work practices. Where possible, replace diesel engines with propane engines. Propane burns more completely with fewer emissions than diesel fuel. If the diesel engine cannot be replaced, diesel exhaust can be removed by using local exhaust ventilation. Local

exhaust ventilation should include both intake and exhaust fans that remove diesel exhaust at its source. Make sure you periodically check ventilation systems to ensure proper functioning. General ventilation of the area by opening doors, windows, roof vents, roof fans, and floor fans is helpful but it's not as effective as local exhaust ventilation.

Make sure your vehicles are fitted with emission controls (e.g. collectors, air cleaners, ceramic particle traps, etc.). Then, check the emissions controls regularly and replaced when necessary.

Enforce diesel equipment (bus, truck, etc) idling restrictions. Don't let engines idle when they're not in use; diesel equipment should be turned off and restarted as needed. Conduct routine maintenance of engines to minimize emissions. Diesel equipment that's producing visible,

smoky exhaust should be removed from service until the condition has been corrected.

If you'd like more detailed information and updates with new information, visit the website maintained by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration at <http://osha.gov/SLTC/dieselexhaust/> □

Improve Safety With Attitude

Creating a safety attitude in the workplace takes the effort of both employers and workers. An employer is responsible for the safety of the worker, but each worker is responsible for applying the safety device or principle to the job. When employers treat workers with respect and show concern for worker safety by enlisting their opinions and implementing their suggestions, improved safety performance results.

If employers talk to and listen to their workers they can learn what motivates workers or prevents them from doing a task safely. Let workers tell you why someone would compromise or bypass a prescribed safety practice. Because worker responsibility and ownership for safety is critical to developing a safety attitude, ask the workers for possible solutions. If the safety solution is their idea, they're more likely to put it into practice.

You can instruct workers in how to perform a job safely, but it's the worker who must find personal value in the instruction and commit to putting safety performance into practice when the instruction is over and the worker is back on the job. It's not just the safety actions but also the safety attitude of the worker an employer must affect to have a lasting impact on job safety performance. □

Continued from previous page

MRSA is to practice good hygiene. Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Keep fingernails clean and clipped short. Keep wounds, cuts, and abrasions clean and covered with a sterile bandage until they are healed. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors, deodorant, or soap. Wash dirty clothes, linens, uniforms, and towels with hot water and laundry detergent. Use a hot dryer rather than air-drying. Clean and disinfect gym and sports equipment before use.

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may appear as a persistent pimple, boil or blister. The sore can be red, hot to the touch, swollen, painful, and have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia or bloodstream, urinary tract, or surgical wound infections. If you think you have contracted MRSA, contact your healthcare provider for MRSA testing and treatment. Then follow treatment recommendations completely to avoid a reoccurrence of the infection. □

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue One, 2008



Safe Lifting Techniques

You may lift hundreds of times in the course of your workday. Sometimes what you lift is big or heavy and sometimes it's a small or light. But, whatever the load, lifting can injure your back if it's done incorrectly. That's why it's important to always practicing safe lifting techniques.

Your back works best when it's used as it was designed. One sure way to risk injuring your back is to lift something improperly or unassisted. Lift with the aid of a mechanical assist device, when available. If you decide you are capable of lifting a light load, make sure you lift correctly. Lift with good sense and always ask for help with loads that you know you cannot lift safely.

The correct way to lift is usually the easiest way to lift a load. To lift the wrong way can, over time, cause back injury and pain. A good way to learn the right from the wrong way to lift is to practice lifting correctly a few times. Here are some safe lifting techniques:

- Move in so that your feet are close to the base of the item to be lifted and shoulder width apart.
- Face the item squarely. Bend your

knees and squat next to the item. In this position, your back gets added lifting strength and power from your legs and arms.

- Move up close to the item, because the backbone must act as a supporting column, and it takes the least strain close in.



- Tilt the item on edge with its long axis straight up so the center of the weight is as high as possible above the ground.
- Still squatting, your feet and legs should be straddling the load, with the back straightened, grasp

the item with both arms and slowly stand up with it, pushing up with your leg muscles. If you can't lift slowly, you can't lift safely.

- When you put an item down, follow these actions in reverse.

You can help protect your back from strain, fatigue, and injury by taking care of yourself. Eat healthy foods and exercise. Stretching during the day helps increase your flexibility and muscle strength. Remember, preventing back injuries is a lot easier than correcting them. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations



Safety News

News about Occupational Safety and Health in
State Contract Agencies

**STATE
COMPENSATION
INSURANCE
FUND**

Loss Control Services

P.O. BOX 420807
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142-0807



PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
REDWOOD CITY, CA
PERMIT NO. 688

Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in State Contract Agencies

Issue One, 2008

How to Order State Fund Safety Materials and Audio Visuals

To order **safety materials** from State Fund's Safety Materials Catalog, State Contract Agencies must complete the *Safety & Health Services Materials Order Form* and include the listed catalog item number and quantity. The cost of each item for State Contract Agencies is \$1.00 with a required \$50.00 minimum order per order form. Prior to shipping, all orders must be prepaid by check payable to State Compensation Insurance Fund and sent along with the order form to:

State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services Dept.
1275 Market Street, Room 630
San Francisco, CA 94103
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

OR State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services Dept.
P.O. Box 420807
San Francisco, CA 94120-7264
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

To request a copy of the Safety Material Catalog or for questions about safety materials, contact the Safety and Health Services department at 415-975-2400 and ask for the Safety Materials Coordinator.

Audio videos are available to State Contract Agencies free of charge by State Fund. To request a video, Agencies must complete the *State Contract Audio Visual Request Form* and submit it directly to the Safety and Health Services Audio Visual Library. Videos are mailed at least one week prior to the viewing date and must be returned within seven days of the viewing date. Audio visuals must be returned in bubble-wrap, padded envelope or secure box to prevent damage. They must be shipped UPS Ground

or by "PRIORITY" U.S. mail and be insured for \$400.00 each. The borrowing Agency assumes responsibility for replacements costs for all lost videos and will be billed for replacement by State Fund.

All audio visual requests must include: the name of the requesting State Contract Agency Department; the name and phone number of the Agency contact person responsible; and the desired viewing date. No more than three audio visuals may be held by an Agency location at any one time. Additional requests for audio visuals will not be sent out until all outstanding videos have been returned. Agencies may mail audio visual requests to:

State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services A/V Library
1275 Market Street, Room 630
San Francisco, CA 94103
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

OR State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services A/V Library
P.O. Box 420807
San Francisco, CA 94120-7264
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

Audiovisuals may also be requested by:
FAX – (415) 975-2444
Phone – (415)-975-2415
E-mail – avlibrary@scif.com

To request a free copy of the **Audio Visual Catalog**, contact the Safety and Health Services A/V Library as listed above. ☐

This State Contract Agencies Safety News is produced by the Safety and Health Services Department of State Fund to assist clients in their loss control efforts. Information or recommendations contained in this publication were obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is only advisory and does not presume to be exhaustive or inclusive of all workplace hazards or situations. Permission to reprint articles subject to approval by State Compensation Insurance Fund.

Published by State Compensation Insurance Fund Safety and Health Services Department. Editor: Judy Kerry