



## 011: Bloodborne Pathogens

### *General concepts*

While most of us are aware of the HIV threat due to extensive press coverage of AIDS, many other illnesses are also transmitted by contact with blood. These include hepatitis, the West Nile virus, and other illnesses that many of us have not yet heard any descriptions. Many of these cause intense suffering and death.

You can contact blood simply by helping a coworker bandage a cut finger.

You can contact bloodborne pathogens if someone else fails to follow the rules. Even on a dried surface, Hepatitis B can be active for two weeks.

While bloodborne pathogens can bring serious consequences to you, these are not so prevalent or so easily transmitted that you should fear helping a bleeding coworker. With the right practices, you can help that coworker and be safe. It's not an either-or situation, except in very rare circumstances.

### *The basic steps*

The basic steps: *fortify, contain, isolate, clean up, notify, evaluate, and follow up.*

**Fortify.** Your body's immune system is a major line of defense against pathogens. If your immune system encounters them in a weakened condition, it can prevail. Pay attention to your nutritional needs (plenty of dark green vegetables), get adequate rest, and consult your doctor if you lack energy or have other symptoms of being run down.

**Contain.** If you incur a bleeding injury or assist a coworker so afflicted, stanch the flow of blood. Use absorbent materials to soak up blood, so it doesn't—for example—drip onto surfaces people are likely to touch before a cleanup can occur.

**Isolate.** Get the injured person to an aid station right away. Do not let an injured person continue to work with a bleeding wound. Keep the number of people in contact with a bleeding person to the minimum required. Use only disposable materials for a cleanup—don't spread contamination by using a mop or other item that will be re-used. If a person bleeds on a vehicle seat, tool, or other item, quarantine that item until cleanup is complete. Putting red tape around the area is not an over-reaction.

**Clean up.** Dispose of any materials you initially used to clean up the blood. Use an approved cleanup kit to finish the job. Discard all materials in a designated red wastebasket or other receptacle if one is on site. You may also use sturdy plastic bags marked "biohazard." Do not throw any of these materials into the regular trash.

**Notify.** Tell your foreman as soon as you can that there is a blood-related problem. Make sure your foreman knows where the incident occurred, the path taken to the aid station, who was involved, and where the used cleanup materials are.

**Evaluate.** With your foreman, evaluate the actions you took. The goal of this is not to place blame, but to identify further necessary action.

**Follow up.** Take the follow up actions instructed by your foreman, until the condition is clear. Your foreman will need to file a report. Make sure you provide any pertinent details before clocking out.

### *Discussion leader duties for this session:*

Obtain a blood cleanup kit, so you can explain its use.

### *What this Safety Talk covers:*

The risks that arise from contact with blood, and the precautions to take.

### *Discussion notes :*

