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OSHA Issues Guidance on Worker Exposure to the Ebola Virus

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The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently issued guidance on the Ebola virus, highlighting the applicable OSHA standards in the event of possible worker exposure to the virus.

Companies that have employees who could be exposed to the deadly virus would probably need to comply with a number of different standards in implementing a comprehensive worker protection program. These employers would include hospitals, immediate care centers, doctors' practices, ambulance services, airport authorities, and guard and maintenance services for these employers.

First, OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) covers exposure to the Ebola virus, since it is included in the subset of contact-transmissible diseases.

Second, where workers may be exposed to bioaerosols containing the Ebola virus, companies must follow OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard (29 CFR 1910.134).

Also, in providing infection control for Ebola, OSHA's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standard (29 CFR 1910.132) and the General Duty Clause of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970, which requires employers to keep their workplace free of recognized hazards, would come into play.

Secondarily, employers must also follow the above and other standards in protecting employees from exposure to chemicals used for cleaning and disinfection. Depending on the chemicals utilized, different or additional PPE (e.g., elastomeric respirators with appropriate cartridges) could be required.

OSHA also states, "[d]epending on the specific work task, setting, and exposure to biological or chemical agents, additional OSHA standards, including the following, may also apply:

General Industry (29 CFR 1910)

- 1910 Subpart I, Personal protective equipment 1910.132, General requirements [related topic page]
- √ 1910.134, Respiratory protection [related topic page]
- √ Appendix A, Fit testing procedures (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix B-1, User seal check procedures (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix B-2, Respiratory cleaning procedures (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix C, OSHA respirator medical evaluation questionnaire (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix D, Information for employees using respirators when not required under standard (Mandatory)

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- 1910 Subpart Z, Toxic and hazardous substances [related topic page]
- √ 1910.1030, Bloodborne pathogens [related topic page]
- √ 1910.1200, Hazard Communication [related topic page]
- √ Appendix A, Health Hazard Criteria (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix B, Physical Hazard Criteria (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix C, Allocation of Label Elements (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix D, Safety Data Sheets (Mandatory)
- √ Appendix E, Definition of "Trade Secret" (Mandatory)

√ Appendix F, Guidance for Hazard Classifications Re: Carcinogenicity (Non-Mandatory)

Preambles to final rules

Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030)

Directives

• Enforcement Procedures for the Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens (PDF). CPL 02-02-069, (2001, November 27). Establishes policies and provides clarification to ensure uniform inspection procedures are followed when conducting inspections to enforce the Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Standard.

• Inspection procedures for the Respiratory Protection Standard. CPL 02-00-158, (2014, June 26). Establishes agency