

**Iowa Department  
of Transportation**

**Office of Public Transit  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010  
515-239-1875**



# **YOUR TICKET TO SAFETY**

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## **Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness**

### **A Handbook for Transit Professionals**



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**T**his handbook has been prepared to complement the informational videotape, *Your Ticket to Safety: Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness for Transit Professionals*.

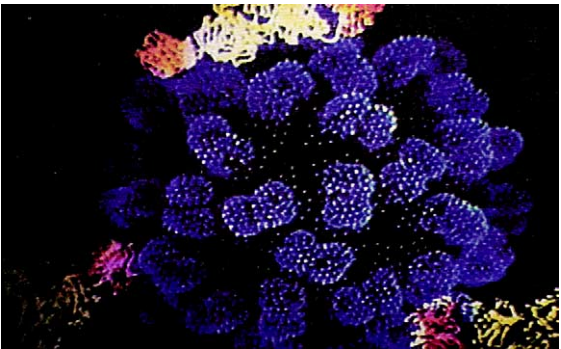
The handbook also provides a personal and ready reference regarding bloodborne pathogens for public transit system personnel, including managers, drivers, mechanics, other employees and service providers. Additional copies of this handbook and the videotape are available through the Office of Public Transit.



## **Introduction**

During the past couple decades our nation and the entire world have seen the dramatic and deadly impact of AIDS. More than a half-million cases of AIDS have been reported in the United States, and to date 68 percent of those infected have died.

Unfortunately, many of us are uninformed and confused about the biological hazards of AIDS and other bloodborne pathogens we potentially face every day in our workplace... including our buses, vans and garages.



## **What Are Bloodborne Pathogens?**

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms carried in the blood that can cause serious diseases.

The bloodborne pathogens that occur most frequently are:

- Hepatitis B Virus (HBV); and
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

AIDS affects our natural ability to fight off illness and the results have proven to be tragic.

## **What is Hepatitis B?**

HBV causes hepatitis, a potentially fatal liver disease. Many people infected with HBV show no symptoms, but their blood and body fluids are still contagious. Hepatitis B is considered to be more contagious in the work place than HIV.

## **Hepatitis B Vaccination Program**

Although research continues, today there is no cure for AIDS and no vaccination for HIV. Fortunately, there is a vaccination program available for Hepatitis B.



This program requires a series of three inoculations over a six-month period. If your duties place you at risk of exposure, regulations require your employer to develop an “Exposure Control Plan” which must include a free Hepatitis B vaccination program. You will be asked to sign a “Refusal Form” if you choose not to participate in the program. If you change your mind at a later date, you may receive vaccine at that time.

## **Blood and Body Fluids**

In addition to being carried in the blood, these deadly microorganisms can be in our body fluids. Body fluids include vaginal secretions, semen and even saliva if it is visibly contaminated with blood. However, uncontaminated tears, perspiration, vomit, urine and feces are not considered dangerous unless they contain visible blood.

## **Transmission and Infection**

We become infected by bloodborne pathogens when they enter our bodies. The routes of entry include absorption through the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth, through breaks in the skin like a cut or scratch, or having skin punctured by a sharp object such as broken glass which has been contaminated.

We have all heard about the dangers of transmitting these deadly viruses by sexual contact and by drug users sharing infected needles.

The greatest exposure concern in the transit industry is the potential for contact with blood or body fluids when an accident occurs.

## **How Do We Know Who is Infected?**

You can never be sure who is and who isn't infected. That's why you must treat all blood and other body fluids as if they are infectious and take all appropriate precautions to avoid contact with these fluids. This is the idea of Universal Precautions.

## **Universal Precautions**

OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, mandates "Universal Precautions" as an approach to infection control by considering all human blood and certain body fluids as if they are infectious for HIV, HBV and other bloodborne pathogens.

This handbook and the videotape, *Your Ticket to Safety*, are just an introduction to a comprehensive training program and exposure control plan OSHA requires for those workers who are at risk for exposure to bloodborne pathogens.



## **Preventing Infection**

We can prevent infection by taking precautions beforehand to block the routes of entry of these viruses into our bodies. One of the most effective barriers is your healthy and intact skin. But, since you might not be aware of a small cut or scratch, the safe approach is to cover and protect yourself from contact to all blood and body fluids. Wearing disposable gloves is one of the first and most important forms of protection.

## **Biohazard Kit**

As OSHA bloodborne pathogen exposure control planning and training are implemented in the transit industry, many vehicles may be equipped with a biohazard kit.

A typical biohazard kit may contain:

- disposable gloves for your hands;
- disinfectant spray for decontamination of any spill;
- paper towels for cleanup;
- absorbent powder for cleanup;
- approved bags and containers for proper disposal;
- mechanical means for handling “sharps”; and
- disinfectant towelettes for immediate hand cleaning.





## **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an accident, your first responsibility is to respond logically and calmly to the situation. That includes care of your passengers, the vehicle, your fellow transit workers, and yourself.

Assuming you pulled safely off the road and radioed for assistance, put on your disposable gloves before you deal with any first aid or begin to clean up any potentially dangerous biohazardous spill.

## **Biohazard Cleanup**

Dispose of any material which you feel may be contaminated by putting it in a leak-proof bag. If the item is saturated with blood or body fluids, it must go in a red biohazard bag.

All blood and body fluids visibly contaminated with blood must be cleaned up with paper towels and/or absorbent powder. Start by spraying the spill area with disinfectant; then, after cleanup and proper disposal of the paper towels or absorbent powder, spray the area with disinfectant again. All cleanup materials, including your gloves, must be carefully discarded in the red biohazard bag. And, if you have reason to believe the bag is torn or will leak...double bag it immediately.





If your cleanup includes broken glass or other sharp objects which may potentially cut or tear your gloves or the disposal bag, extra caution is in order. “Sharps” are to be handled strictly by mechanical means. Pick them up by mechanical means and dispose of them in a leak-proof, puncture-proof container properly marked with the approved biohazard symbol.

### **Biohazard Symbol**



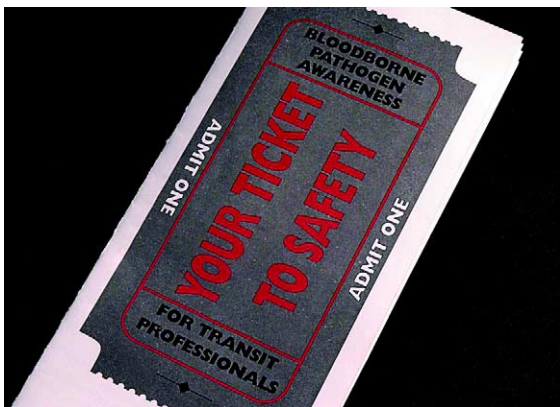
## **Back at the Garage**

When you return to the garage after a potentially dangerous bloodborne pathogen incident, the first order of business is to thoroughly wash your hands with plenty of soap and running water.

Additional bloodborne pathogen training will be provided by your transit manager. This will include proper disposal of the hazardous wastes you've brought back, and how to fill out a required "Incident Report Form." This document is designed to ensure proper follow-up for you and any others involved in the exposure incident.

## **Conclusion**

Discuss these guidelines and procedures with your supervisor and fellow transit professionals. Remember...Being concerned, being trained, and being prepared is **"Your Ticket to Safety."**







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