V.I.E.W.S.

VIEWS & INFORMATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND WORKPLACE SAFETY

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Bloodborne Pathogens

By Anthony Gruerio, BWS EHS

Employees are familiar with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (**OSHA**) for the many Health and Safety programs they have generated since its inception in 1971. The bulk of their efforts have been in industries that involve machines, chemicals and other processes that, if unchecked, could adversely affect the health of the people who operate and coordinate these activities. Although these operations generally contain the most visible hazards to workers, OSHA has also established regulations that guard against the spread of "Bloodborne Pathogens."

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are examples of the many concerns for workers exposed to blood and other potentially infectious materials.

OSHA states that Bloodborne Pathogens are pathogenic microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include among others hepatitis B virus, which causes hepatitis B; hepatitis C virus which causes hepatitis C; and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. As implied in their name, these microorganisms are normally spread through blood or other potentially infections materials (**OPIM**). Due to the seriousness of the diseases caused by these organisms, OSHA created the Bloodborne Pathogen standard (29 CFR 1910.1030).

This standard limits occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material since any exposure could result in the transmission of bloodborne pathogens. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C are examples of the many concerns for workers exposed to blood and other potentially infectious materials. Bloodborne pathogen exposure may occur in many ways, but needlestick injuries are the most common cause. Exposure may also occur through contact of contaminants with the nose, mouth, eyes, or skin. DEP employees, while not engaged in healthcare activities; do perform functions that may expose employees to these infectious agents.

The OSHA standard covers all employees who could be "reasonably anticipated" to come into contact with blood and other

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Safety and Powered Industrial Trucks (PITs)

By Julisa Diaz

Associate Health & Safety Coordinator, O*EHSC*

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that 90 deaths and some 90,000 accidents occur each year as a result of forklifts, which is one type of Powered Industrial Truck (PITs). OSHA attributes injuries and death to a lack of safe operating procedures and insufficient training. Although some injuries and deaths could be blamed on improper training, other workplace factors should also be looked at carefully. These would include lift truck maintenance; poor visibility from forklifts; obstructions in aisles; lack of guarding of docks and ramps; drivers unaware of pedestrian traffic; and unstable loads.

DEP has recently developed its standard operating procedure for PITs in keeping with the requirements of OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178 that regulate the use, maintenance, operation training and evaluation for all PITs used at DEP's facilities. This procedure outlines responsibilities, equipment standards and controlling modifications, classification for hazards areas, safe operations, examination/inspection before use, maintenance, evaluation, training, and recording keeping that would ensure the safe operation and proper maintenance of PITs.

Various types of PITs are widely used in many DEP operations e.g tow mowers, forklift trucks etc. To make workers who operate PITs at DEP aware of the safety requirements pertaining to powered industrial truck, operator training is critical and mandatory to all full-time, part-time, seasonal, substitute, and occasional PIT operators.

Training of affected employees must be completed in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.178(l) before being permitted to operate a PIT. This training should be provided to employees as a combination of:

- **Formal instruction** (lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning, videotape, written material);
- **Practical (hands-on) training** (demonstrations performed by the trainer and practical exercises performed by the trainee);
- **Initial training**, includes introduction to work environment, operation and associated workplace hazards.
- **Refresher training** is required after an evaluation whenever unsafe practices (e.g., accident or near-miss) are observed or as necessary on the basis of changed conditions.

There are four main areas that must be addressed during training:

- General hazards that are applicable to the operations of PITs.
- Hazards associated with the operation of specific types of PITs.
- General hazards in the work environment.
- Specific hazards in the workplace where the vehicle operates.

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potentially infectious materials as a result of performing their job duties.

To reduce or eliminate the hazards of occupational exposure, the DEP is developing exposure control plans for the affected workers with details on protection measures. **Engineering controls** are the primary means of eliminating or minimizing employee exposure. These include the use of devices that prevent contact with infectious substances. **Work practice controls** such as hand washing are stressed by the OSHA standard. Appropriate **Personal Protective Equipment** must be used when necessary. The standard also requires that the Hepatitis B vaccination be made available to all employees who have occupational exposure to blood.

The **exposure control plan** is the key provision of the standard because it requires DEP to identify individuals who will receive the training, protective equipment, vaccination, and other protections required by the standard. These efforts are currently underway throughout the Agency, and are being coordinated through Bureau EHS offices. The plan calls for an analysis of the type and method of exposure employees may encounter and ways to reduce the threat of infection.

DEP Police, Rescue, and Hazardous Material Response Teams are all groups that fall under the OSHA standard. Further analysis by Agency and Bureau efforts will identify all workgroups that come under the OSHA standard. DEP will soon issue and train on the Agency-wide policy on bloodborne pathogens.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, you are encouraged to contact your Bureau EHS Office.

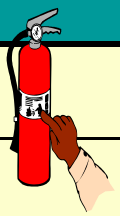
(PITs continued from page 2)

Evaluations for PIT operators are required at least once every three years. Evaluation and training must be conducted by a person with the knowledge, training, and experience to evaluate and train PIT operators. A written certification record must be maintained for three years with information on the name of the operator, the date of training, the date of evaluation, and the identity of the person(s) performing the training or evaluation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS FOR A P.I.T. OPERATORS

-Do not drive a vehicle without completing the daily inspection checklist
-Do not go down ramps load first
-Do not refuel a vehicle while it is running or while you are smoking
-Do not exceed the vehicle load limit
-Do not carry passengers
-Do not operate in railcars or trucks without wheels chalked
-Never drive the truck into the rail car/ truck without inspecting the floor.
-Report oily or wet floor surfaces
-Do not exceed the speed limits
-Never park in fire lanes or remove keys from vehicles
-Face the direction of travel
-Look at all directions before backing
-Be aware of grades and low overheads
-Make a complete stop at all doors and aisle intersections
-No horseplay
-Avoid quick starts and stops
-PITs used on roads must be registered by NYC Department of Motor Vehicles

Housekeeping Means Safekeeping



Clean up as you work and you will have a safer, more comfortable work area!

It takes less time and effort to straighten and clean up as you go than to stop work later for cleanup.

Promptly remove dust, scrap, and spills created by the work you are doing. Tidy up by putting away tools and materials before you go to the next task.

On-the-job housekeeping helps prevent fires caused by accumulation of scrap materials and flammables. Falls can be prevented by cleaning up obstacles and slippery floor surfaces.

You are also able to do a better job—and enjoy it more—when your work areas is clean and orderly.

Here are some reminders about workplace housekeeping!

- Keep traffic routes and stairways free of clutter such as stored materials or scrap.
- Keep emergency exists, fire-fighting equipment and sprinklers free of obstructions
- Store materials safely. Flammable materials and many chemicals should be stored according to instructions in well-ventilated areas away from sources of ignition.
- Don’t overfill shelves, drawers, racks or bins. Obtain more storage fixture as required.
- Remove unneeded equipment and materials from you work area. Broken equipment should be tagged for repair or disposal. Unnecessary tools should be returned to the toll crib. Return supplies to the central depot so others can use them.
- If you smoke, do so only in designating areas and use the ashtray provided.
- Arrange your work areas so tools and materials used frequently are within easy reach and items used less frequently are in other areas. Have a place to store each item and return it there as soon as you are finished using it.

Maintaining your workspace as you go is the only way to go. This habit will save you time and effort in the long run.

Lyme Disease

By Krista Wrixon

Safety Coordinator, Bureau of Water Supply

In the early 1970s, a mysterious clustering of arthritis cases occurred among children in Lyme, Connecticut and surrounding towns. Medical professionals soon recognized the illness as a distinct disease, which they called Lyme disease. These researchers subsequently discovered the cause, carrier, and symptoms of this new illness.

The cause of the illness is a bacterium called a spirochete. This spirochete is passed to people and domestic animals through the bite of an infected deer tick. The tick generally has to be attached for at least 48-72 hours for the transfer can occur. Therefore, Lyme Disease generally will not occur unless the tick has been attached for more than 48-72 hours.

Deer ticks are most commonly found in woodland areas where there are deer, mice, and other animals for them to feed on. They can also be found in grassy and brushy habitat located near wood. Ticks do not jump or fly, but instead stay low to the ground and grab onto humans or animals brushing against them. Deer ticks are capable of transmitting the disease to humans. If a deer tick is infected and it bites a person, the disease may be passed to that person. The bite is painless and often goes unnoticed.

Lyme disease cannot be caught from other people, domestic animals, or insects such as mosquitoes or flies. The most common symptom of Lyme disease is an expanding red rash, called a bulls-eye rash because it appears like a target with concentric circles of redness, often seen at the site of the tick bite.

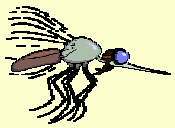
The rash usually appears three to 30 days after the bite and may linger for several weeks. It should be noted that the rash does not occur in all cases.

Other symptoms of Lyme disease can include fever, sore throat, fatigue, sleeping difficulties, joint and muscle pain, swollen glands, and dizziness. Even if they are not treated, these symptoms may go away

Weeks or months after a tick bite, the symptom that brings most people to the doctor is stiffness in the large joints (arthritis); Bell's Palsy, the drooping of one side of the face, may also occur. Lyme disease can be diagnosed by a physician through a physical examination and the patient's history of symptoms. Blood tests may also be used to help confirm the diagnosis. Antibiotics given for Lyme disease when in its early stages generally result in complete recovery and with no long term complications.

If you find a tick on you, tug gently but firmly with blunt tweezers near the "head" of the tick until it releases its hold on the skin. To lessen the chance of contact with the bacterium, try not to crush the tick's body or handle the tick with bare fingers. Swab the bite area thoroughly with an antiseptic to prevent bacterial infection. Jot down the date and spot on your body where the tick attached itself in case symptoms develop. Ticks may also be saved and examined by a physician to determine if it is a carrier of the disease.

To decrease the chances of developing the disease, it is best to catch ticks before they can bite and infect you. Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks can be easily spotted. Wear long-sleeved shirts and closed shoes and socks. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and tuck shirt into pants. Walk in the center of trails to avoid overgrown grass and brush. After being outdoors in a tick-infested area, remove, wash, and dry clothing. Inspect your body thoroughly and remove carefully any attached ticks.



West Nile Virus

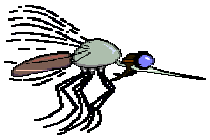
By Ken O'Connor

Health and Safety Coordinator, Bureau of Water Supply

(Adapted from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene website)

West Nile Virus (**WNV**) is a mosquito-borne disease that can infect humans, birds, horses, and other mammals. In most humans, WNV infection can cause a mild flu-like illness, or it may cause no symptoms at all. WNV first appeared in North America in New York City in 1999. Since then, the virus has spread across the continental United States. WNV is predominantly spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. WNV is **NOT** spread by casual contact such as touching or caring for someone who is infected.

Outbreaks of WNV have occurred in Africa, Egypt, Israel, Asia, Romania, Russia, and France. Before 1999, WNV had never before been found in the Western Hemisphere. The virus was most likely introduced by an infected bird or mosquito that was imported from a country where the virus is common. People older than 50, particularly those over 65, have the highest risk of severe disease. It is unknown if people with compromised immune systems are at an increased risk for WNV infection.



Infected mosquitoes are the primary source of WNV and caused the recent outbreaks in the United States. Although several types of ticks in Africa and Europe have been found to be infected with WNV, there is no evidence that ticks or other insects in this country are able to transmit WNV.

Most people who are infected with WNV have no symptoms or experience only mild illness. If illness does occur, symptoms generally appear between 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some persons may also develop a mild rash or swollen lymph glands. In some individuals, particularly the elderly, WNV can cause serious disease that affects brain and spinal tissue. There is no specific treatment for WNV. Most people who become infected recover on their own. You should seek medical care as soon as possible if you develop signs of encephalitis, whose symptoms include a combination of fever, muscle weakness, and confusion.

From June through October, when mosquitoes are most active, take the following precautions: wear protective clothing such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts, avoid shaded, bushy areas, and limit outdoor activity at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

Help control the spread of WNV by eliminating standing water and mosquito habitats near your home. Preventing mosquitoes from breeding is the most effective way of slowing the spread of the disease. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing or slow moving water. In residential areas, standing water can accumulate in unused tires, cans, unused pools and pool covers, and other receptacles that collect water. Also maintain the area around your home; weeds, tall grass, and bushes provide outdoor resting places for mosquitoes. And lastly, mosquitoes can enter homes through unscreened windows, doors, or broken screens so repair and replace screens and doors where necessary.

Health &Safety Solutions

Problem

Catskill District personnel observed during routine deliveries of compressed gas cylinders to the **Ben Nesin Laboratory** located on the **Ashokan Campus** that the delivery truck was parking so as to block the Route 28A traffic lanes. Parking in this manner limited sight distance and forced traffic into the on-coming traffic lane causing a hazard for both vehicles and for DEP employees crossing the road from the parking lot. When asked, the truck driver stated that the truck needed to be parked perpendicular to the building so he could lower the truck tailgate onto the top step of the entry stairs and deliver the compressed gas directly into the building. This was the only way he could deliver the compressed gas cylinders into the building since carrying the cylinders up the front stairs was a safety hazard and prohibited by his contract.

Solution

Working together **West of Hudson Operations Division** personnel (**Todd West, Patrick Lambert,** and **Ed Carroll**) and DWQC personnel (**Jacque Schiffer, Sheila Brady,** and **Karen Hacker**) investigated possible solutions and determined that the best solution for this problem was to construct a delivery ramp. A ramp built to the side of the entry stairs would allow the truck driver to park parallel to the building and use a handcart to roll the cylinders safely into the building. Acting on this determination, the TOS group (**Ed Carroll, Bill Briggs, Chuck Woodard, Craig Barringer,** and **Brian Gray**) designed and installed the ramp with in a month! Thanks to all for recognizing and acting quickly to correct a safety hazard.

The new ramp at Ben Nesin Laboratory.

Pictured: Ed Carroll, Chuck Woodard, Bill Briggs, Sheila Brady, and Patrick Lambert.

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OEHSC

The **Office of Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance (OEHSC)** has been established to coordinate and enhance agency-wide environmental and occupational health and safety management activities. Its mission is to provide support and direction in complying with relevant federal, state, and local standards, guidelines, and regulations as well as to monitor the effectiveness of agency-wide environmental, health and safety policies.

The goal of the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance is to promote pro-active compliance strategies through the preparation and revision of procedures, programs, and employee training (specifically tailored to Agency operations), while assessing hazards, preventing violations, and maintaining safe and sensible work practices.

THE OEHSC INTRANET HAS BEEN UPDATED !

The **Office of Environmental Health and Safety Compliance** (OEHSC) Intranet (**http://egov.nycnet/dep**) has been recently updated. All information on the site is current.

That information includes: current and past "VIEWS" newsletters; the 2003 OEHSC Annual Report; up-to-date EH&S Policies, Procedures, and Forms; a Calendar of Events (posted as notices are received); and the Forum where you can voice your concern about issues regarding Environmental Health and Safety.

Documents are posted in either PDF or WORD, READ ONLY formats, and they may be printed directly from the web site or copied into folders on your computer.

If you have an agency event that you would like posted on the Calendar, send relevant, approved information to Kevin Moore by e-mail (kmoore@dep.nyc.gov).

If you have an issue regarding Environmental Health and Safety policies and procedures that you would like to tell us about, use the “Contact Us” link in the **Forum**.

The intranet address is: http://egov.nycnet/dep.