



BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS AWARENESS

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

April 2026

Video Introduction

Today's safety topic begins with a short training video from **JJ Safety**:

Title: *"Bloodborne Pathogens: Protecting Your Health"*

Watch here: <https://youtu.be/dYXcRbvXQs8?si=NzoeZw7KhC-ON0KC>

This video provides basic bloodborne pathogens training for awareness purposes.

Purpose

The purpose of this training is to ensure that all Town of Perinton employees understand the risks associated with bloodborne pathogens and know how to protect themselves while performing their duties. Many municipal employees—whether working in public works, parks, facilities, or safety roles—may unexpectedly encounter situations involving blood or bodily fluids.

This training will help you:

- Recognize exposure risks
- Use proper protective measures
- Respond correctly if exposure occurs

This is not just a compliance requirement—it is about **protecting your health and safety on the job**.

What Are Bloodborne Pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms present in human blood that can cause serious diseases. These pathogens can enter the body through broken skin or mucous membranes and may lead to long-term illness or even death if untreated.



The three primary diseases of concern are:

- **Hepatitis B (HBV):**
A virus that affects the liver and can lead to both acute and chronic disease. One of the most concerning aspects of Hepatitis B is that it can survive on surfaces for up to several days, making indirect exposure possible. Fortunately, there is a highly effective vaccine available.
- **Hepatitis C (HCV):**
Also affects the liver and is often referred to as a “silent disease” because many individuals do not show symptoms for years. There is currently no vaccine, which makes prevention critical.
- **HIV:**
The virus that attacks the immune system, reducing the body’s ability to fight infections. While less easily transmitted than Hepatitis B, it is still a serious concern in occupational exposures.

Understanding these diseases helps reinforce why **every exposure must be taken seriously**, even if the risk seems low.

How Exposure Happens

Exposure occurs when infected blood or certain bodily fluids enter your body. This typically happens through:

- **Broken skin** such as cuts, abrasions, or puncture wounds
- **Mucous membranes** like the eyes, nose, or mouth
- **Sharps injuries**, including needles or broken glass

In a municipal work environment, exposure risks are often **unexpected**. You are not working in a hospital, but you may still encounter hazards such as:

- Responding to an injured resident in a park or public building
- Cleaning restrooms or public areas where blood or bodily fluids are present
- Handling trash or debris that may contain used needles
- Assisting at accident scenes or public events
- Maintaining properties where illegal dumping has occurred
- Maintenance work associated with wastewater facilities

Because you often do not know the source or condition of the material, you must always assume risk is present.



Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are a foundational safety principle. This means you **treat all blood and bodily fluids as if they are infectious**, regardless of the source.

This approach eliminates guesswork. Instead of trying to determine whether something is “safe,” you consistently apply the same protective measures every time.

In practice, this means:

- Never touching blood or bodily fluids without protection
- Always using appropriate PPE
- Taking immediate action if exposure is suspected

Universal precautions are simple but extremely effective when consistently followed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment is your primary defense against exposure. The type of PPE you use depends on the situation, but the goal is always to create a barrier between you and the hazard.

Gloves

Disposable gloves are the most commonly used PPE and should be worn anytime there is potential contact with blood or bodily fluids. Gloves must be:

- Put on before contact
- Removed carefully to avoid contamination
- Disposed of after a single use

Eye and Face Protection

If there is any risk of splashing or spraying—such as during cleanup or when assisting an injured person—eye protection or a face shield should be used to protect mucous membranes.

Masks

Masks may be necessary when there is a risk of droplets entering the nose or mouth, particularly during close-contact assistance.



Protective Clothing

In situations involving larger spills or contamination, additional protection such as disposable gowns or coveralls may be required.

It is critical to remember:

- PPE only works if used properly
 - Damaged or compromised PPE should never be used
 - Disposable PPE should never be reused
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Safe Work Practices

In addition to PPE, safe work practices significantly reduce your risk.

One of the most important rules is:

Never handle sharps directly.

If you find sharps, contact Safety and Security immediately and keep the area secure. Safety and Security will retrieve the hypodermic and dispose of it properly.

If Exposure Occurs

Despite precautions, exposures can still happen. When they do, **speed matters**.

If you experience:

- A needle stick or puncture
- Blood splashed into your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Contact with broken skin

You must take the following steps immediately:

1. Wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water
2. Flush eyes or mucous membranes with clean water
3. Notify your supervisor right away
4. Seek medical evaluation as soon as possible
5. Complete all required documentation



Prompt action can significantly reduce the risk of infection and ensures you receive proper follow-up care.

Cleaning and Decontamination

Proper cleanup of contaminated areas is essential to prevent secondary exposure.

When cleaning blood or bodily fluids:

- Always wear appropriate PPE
- Use an approved disinfectant (such as a bleach solution or EPA-approved cleaner)
- Follow proper contact times for disinfectants
- Dispose of all contaminated materials in designated containers

After cleanup:

- Carefully remove PPE to avoid contamination
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water

Never rush through a cleanup—taking the time to do it correctly protects you and others.

Key Takeaways

Bloodborne pathogen safety comes down to a few critical principles:

- Always assume blood and bodily fluids are infectious
- Use PPE every time there is a potential exposure
- Never handle sharps directly
- Follow proper cleanup and hygiene practices
- Report exposures immediately and seek medical care

