

## Protecting Against Bloodborne Pathogens

### WHAT ARE BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS?

Bloodborne pathogens are micro-organisms in human blood or body fluid that cause disease in humans. The three bloodborne pathogens that receive the most attention, and pose a serious health threat if contracted, are the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), which causes a severe form of Hepatitis in some or acts as a carrier in others, and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS.

### METHODS OF TRANSMISSION

Bloodborne pathogens are usually transmitted or passed on when disease organisms enter the body through mucus membranes or through breaks in the skin. While intact skin offers some protection against bloodborne pathogens, they may be transmitted through the breaks in skin via accidents, injuries or burns. They may also enter the body through open cuts, nicks, skin abrasions and cracked skin caused by various types of dermatitis.

At work, the most common exposure to bloodborne pathogens could occur when an infected worker has an injury causing direct exposure to human blood, and the person who comes to help them is not wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) or practicing universal precautions.



### UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Universal precautions is a method of infection control in which all blood and certain human body fluids are treated as if known to be infectious for HIV, HBV and other bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions are to be observed in all situations where there is a potential for contact with blood or other potentially infectious material.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used in conjunction with universal precautions when dealing with all body fluids. Qualified, trained first-aiders should be equipped to safeguard against this exposure.

You should be aware that there is a good possibility that you may have small nicks or cuts on you from daily work activities and jobs tasks. These nicks and cuts, in addition to your mouth, nose and eyes, are examples of possible entryways for bloodborne pathogens present in the injured person to enter your circulatory system.

### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (PPE) includes latex or vinyl gloves, gowns, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags and face masks. This equipment can significantly reduce the health risks for workers exposed to blood and other potentially infectious materials. PPE must be suitable for the level of expected exposure and should be readily accessible. To provide first aid, employees should be trained on the proper use of PPE and how to respond effectively and safely to an injury.



### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If you have an exposure incident:

- Wash the exposed area thoroughly with running water and non-abrasive, antibacterial soap
- Flush mouth, nose and eyes for 15 minutes, if blood is splashed in mucous membranes
- Contact your supervisor right away, notify your Airswift contact and seek medical treatment

As your employer we have 24 hours upon notice to arrange for medical care.

