

957 Communicable Disease Exposures and Response Protocols

957.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this order is to provide reporting guidelines for employees who believe they have been exposed to any communicable disease during the normal course of their work. This order covers the most prevalent types of reported exposures which are Tuberculosis (TB) and Blood Exposures (HIV, Hepatitis B & C).

957.1.1 DEFINITION OF A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EXPOSURE

When an external source of blood, body fluid or bacteria/virus from an infected person comes into contact with an employees' mucous membranes (eyes, mouth, or nose), an opening in the officers' skin or is inhaled by the officer.

957.1.2 DEFINITION OF DESIGNATED INFECTION CONTROL OFFICER (DICO)

Person serving as an agency's designated infection control officer under section 81.012 of the Health and Safety code. Austin Police Departments designated DICO will be the APD physician.

957.1.3 DICO RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) DICO responsibilities shall include the following:

1. Serve as the point of contact for possible communicable disease exposure reporting and post exposure notification;
2. Evaluate possible exposure events and required responses;
3. Document the exposure follow up process;
4. Interact and communicate with medical facilities involved in exposure testing, and counseling for officers;
5. Monitor state and federal laws, regulations and guidelines for department compliance;
6. Educate department members on current and new guidelines, laws and best practices related to exposures;
7. Collect and maintain data related to exposure statistics and exposure rates for monthly or year-end reports.

957.2 PREVENTION OF EXPOSURE

Each communicable disease has its own methods of causing infection. Each employee can limit the risk involved with any method by simply using the tools that are available to each of them. Use your (PPE's) personnel protection equipment i.e.: Rubber gloves, safety goggles and disposable filter masks to decrease the risk of exposure and becoming infected with any disease/illness.

957.2.1 SUGGESTED EMPLOYEE ACTIONS IN ALL EXPOSURES

Employees believing they have been involved in a blood exposure should:

- (a) Thoroughly flush mucous membranes with water and thoroughly wash skin with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- (b) It may be appropriate for the exposed employee who has been exposed to release care & custody of the suspect or delegate other tasks to a fellow employee so that the exposed employee may take more immediate decontamination or sanitization measures.

957.3 BLOOD EXPOSURES

A blood exposure can occur when an external source of blood comes into contact with another person's mucous membranes (eyes, mouth, or nose) or an opening in the skin. The highest risk for contamination is with hepatitis.

- (a) Notify a supervisor and proceed immediately to any hospital. It is recommended, but not required, to use a hospital that is familiar with blood exposure protocol (e.g., ~~Braackenridge~~ [Dell Seton](#), Seton Main, St. David's).
- (b) Upon arriving at the hospital employees should:
 1. Explain to the intake nurse that they have been exposed to blood.

2. Review the circumstances of how the exposure occurred with the doctor. The ER doctor will make an initial determination on whether a blood exposure has occurred.

957.3.1 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL EXPOSURES

An employee who believes that he/she has been exposed to any communicable disease shall notify his/her immediate supervisor (at least within 24 hours) or at the start of the next shift in order to be eligible for wage continuation benefits. To safeguard the employee's rights to workers' compensation, any required blood test should be done within 10 days to test for HIV and Hepatitis.

- (a) The employee's supervisor shall ensure the following forms are completely filled out. These forms are located in the Workers' Compensation Packet or can be printed from the "Workers' Comp Folder" in the public drive.
 1. Employers First Report of Injury or Illness (DWC-1)
 2. Supervisor's investigation report
 3. Letter of Rights for Employees
 4. Employees Request for Wage Continuation (WC-800)
 5. Texas Workers Compensation Work Status Report (DWC-73)
 - (a) This is filled out completely by the treating physician; however emergency room physicians are not required by law to complete the DWC-73. In these cases the discharge paperwork will suffice.
 6. Fax only the signed and notarized Sworn Affidavit Requesting Testing Following an Exposure and addendum to the following: (For All and any type of exposures Blood, TB, Hepatitis, etc) to: The ~~HHSD~~ [Austin Public Health \(APH\) Surveillance Program](#) at (512) 972-5772 and The APD Physician/DICO at (512) 974-~~6655~~[0222](#).
 7. Fax all the above forms and discharge paperwork to the APD [HR](#) Workers' Compensation Office or scan and email the forms from any XEROX network printer to ~~apdworkerscompensation~~APDHRWorkersCompensation@austintexas.gov.
 8. Forward all original documentation to the APD [HR](#) Workers' Compensation Office via interoffice mail.
- (b) With all suspected exposure incidents, the employee will also complete an exposure packet which also must be submitted any time that an exposure is reported. The packet will include the exposure affidavit.
 1. If the exposure involves a sworn employee they must sign the sworn affidavit requesting testing following an exposure in the presence of another licensed Texas peace officer. The form can be notarized by another peace officer provided that the notarizing peace officer has no relation to the incident and cannot testify to any fact or circumstance surrounding the incident. The notarizing officer and involved employee (exposed officer) cannot be the same person.
 - (a) The exposed officer shall complete in 1st person only one of the following exposure packets:
 1. The Non-Needle and/or Sharps Exposure Packet; or
 2. The Needle and/or Sharps Exposure Packet.
 - (b) The notarizing peace officer SHALL follow the instructions provided in the packet.
 - (c) The employee's supervisor must fax the completed exposure affidavit to the ~~HHSD~~ [APH](#) Surveillance Program at (512) 972-5772 and the APD Physician/DICO at (512) 974-~~6655~~[0222](#).
 2. If the employee is a civilian, they will complete the exposure packet titled "Civilian Only Exposure Packet" found in the same folder location; Public/APD approved Forms/Workers comp/~~exposure packets/Civilian only~~.
 - (a) This exposure packet uses a sworn notary page instead of the Peace Officer addendum form.
 - (b) The exposure packet will then be submitted in the same manner as the sworn exposure affidavit.

957.3.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Regardless of whether an ER doctor makes an initial determination that a blood exposure has occurred, supervisors will:

- (a) Make direct phone contact with the on-duty Watch Lieutenant via (512) 974-7822. If no answer, have APD Communications facilitate direct phone contact. Brief the Watch Lieutenant on the circumstances of the exposure.
- (b) Notify the ~~Austin Travis County Health and Human Services Department (HHSD)~~ [Austin Public Health \(APH\)](#) at (512) 972-5555 of any potential employee blood exposure incident. Only the ~~HHSD-APH~~ doctor can make a final determination on whether a blood exposure has occurred. If it is after hours, supervisors will leave a short message with the employee's name, incident number, and whether the ER doctor made an initial determination of blood exposure.
- (c) Fax the affidavit and addendum to ~~HHSD-APH~~ and the APD physician/DICO. Then fax all the above forms and discharge paperwork to the APD [HR Workers' Compensation Office](#) or scan and email the forms from any XEROX network printer to apdworkerscompensation@apdhrworkerscompensation@austintexas.gov.

957.4 POST EXPOSURE INFORMATION

Lab results from source blood draws completed by the ~~Austin Travis County Health and Human Services~~ [Austin Public Health](#) will be ~~faxed to the Austin Police Department Physician/DICO~~ [forwarded to the Occupational Health Department at the direction of APD HR Workers' Compensation. Occupational Health will provide the results to the Department Physician/DICO.](#)

- (a) The Department ~~p~~Physician/DICO will contact the employee within 72 hours and inform the employee of the results.
- (b) Employees who have not heard from the Department physician/DICO within 72 hours of the incident should contact the [Department ~~P~~physician/DICO](#) directly.

957.5 FILING OF CRIMINAL CHARGES

If criminal charges are to be filed against an individual for attempting to expose an officer to blood, or to cause alarm or harass an officer by putting them in fear of being infected, regardless if the individual is carrying a communicable disease, the officer should proceed with the filing of Harassment of a Public Servant (Tex. Penal Code § 22.11).

- (a) The individual need not be infected with a communicable disease to meet the elements of Harassment of a Public Servant and therefore no blood draw from the individual will be performed for the purpose of filing criminal charges.
- (b) Under no circumstances will any suspect or person be requested to submit to any blood and/or saliva sample for testing. Only the ~~Travis County Health and Human Services~~ [Austin Public Health](#) has such authority.

957.6 TUBERCULOSIS (TB) EXPOSURES

Tuberculosis is a disease that is spread from person to person through the air. It must be inhaled by the victim for it to be contracted. Almost all TB can be cured. Becoming infected with TB is more difficult than previously believed. TB is almost always contracted while indoors with an infected person for long periods of time; the sun's UV (ultra violet) light kills active TB germs including drug resistant strains.

- (a) The employee who suspects that they have been exposed to TB shall notify their supervisor and complete the workers' compensation packet and the exposure affidavit packet. There is no need to report to any Emergency room for possible TB exposures.
- (b) The exposed employee shall contact the TB Surveillance team at the ~~Travis County Health and Human Services Department (HHSD)~~ [Austin Public Health \(APH\)](#) during normal business hours. Their offices and clinic are located at 15 Waller ~~s~~Street, Austin TX. This is the only location where testing for the COA is conducted. The Number is (512) 972-5460.
- (c) The exposed employee will review the circumstances with the team and may arrange an appointment time for their TB testing. Employees are reminded to contact the TB surveillance team by phone prior to any testing/treatment. Prior calling will help in arranging the most convenient and expedited testing for the employee.
- (d) It is suggested that TB testing be completed by the HHSD team for they have the most advanced experience dealing with TB and utilize the more advanced blood testing procedures. The blood

test is more accurate, less subjective and requires only one visit, unlike the skin test which requires a subsequent interpretation visit.

- (e) If an exposed employee desires that their personal physician perform the test, the employee MUST ensure that their personal physician accepts workers' compensation claims. Otherwise, tests conducted will be at the employees' expense.

957.7 EVIDENCE /PROPERTY HANDLING PROCEDURES

Evidence or other materials coming into the custody of the Police Department and suspected of being contaminated should be treated with extraordinary care.

- (a) General procedures:
 1. All materials contaminated with blood or other body fluids, whether wet or dry, will be handled with disposable rubber gloves.
 2. Hypodermic needles and other sharp objects will be packaged in puncture resistant containers.
 - (a) To prevent needle stick injuries; employees SHOULD NOT cap, bend, break, or remove needles from the syringe, or otherwise manipulate the needle by hand. The needles placement in the protective container is of more importance.
 3. Blood or body fluid contaminated equipment
 - (a) Any Non-disposable item, when contaminated with blood/body fluid, will be treated as if the item has been exposed to a communicable disease. It should be cleaned with a disinfectant agent (i.e. Chlorine bleach-water solution of 1:10; as recommended by the CDC- Center for Disease Control) followed by a thorough washing with soap and water. Metal items, such as handcuffs or service weapons, require drying and lubrication/oil treatment afterwards to prevent rust.
 - (b) Officer's Clothing contaminated with blood or body fluid should be removed evaluated by EMS or AFD and decontaminated at the scene or bagged as hazardous materials and disposed of per AFD Hazardous Materials policy or EMS Biohazard policy.
 4. Evidence with blood or body fluids should be packaged in accordance with methods outlined in evidence handling procedures available at evidence drop off locations. Items with blood or body fluid must be packaged to prevent any cross contamination of other evidence/property and must be clearly marked as "Biohazard". (General Order 618.4.34 (~~Submitting Biohazard Hazardous~~ Material)).

957.8 QUARANTINE RESPONSE

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the ~~Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (ATCHHS)~~ [Austin Public Health \(APH\)](#) have authority to establish quarantine areas. The ~~ATCHHS~~ [APH](#) is the local health authority. The Austin Police Department will not establish a quarantine area.

- (a) General Procedures:
 1. Quarantine orders will be obtained by the local health authority (HA).
 - (a) In exigent circumstances a verbal notification from the HA to law enforcement at the scene is acceptable as an official order.
 - (b) A written or verbal notice is similar to an arrest warrant. This is not an arrest, but a detention under an Order of Protective Custody as issued under HSC 81.162.
 2. Persons who try to enter or leave quarantine may be guilty of a 3rd Degree Felony under HSC 81.085.
 - (a) HSC 81.085 authorizes "reasonable force" to secure a quarantine area and except as directed by the department (DSHS) or HA, to prevent an individual from entering or leaving the quarantine area.
 - (b) Officers will follow the Department's Response to Resistance general order.
 3. The initial officers at the site of quarantine may not have full Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE.
 - (a) These officers shall remain outside of the quarantine area as much as possible, avoiding the "hot zone" unless needed by AFD/EMS. They will remain on scene until relieved by better equipped and trained units. The officers may contact AFD/EMS to