

EMS Biohazard Management & Cleanup Policy

Purpose

To establish procedures for the safe handling, cleanup, disposal, and documentation of biohazardous materials encountered during EMS operations. This policy is intended to protect patients, EMS personnel, and the public from exposure to bloodborne pathogens and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) while maintaining compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Policy

All EMS personnel shall utilize Standard Precautions and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) whenever exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials is anticipated. Biohazardous waste shall be handled, transported, and disposed of in a manner that minimizes the risk of contamination and exposure.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personnel shall wear appropriate PPE based on the anticipated level of exposure, including but not limited to:

- Disposable medical gloves
- Eye protection
- Surgical mask or respirator, as appropriate
- Fluid-resistant gown or protective clothing when necessary

PPE shall be changed between patients or whenever contaminated, damaged, or compromised.

Biohazard Cleanup Procedures

Following any incident involving blood, bodily fluids, or other potentially infectious materials, EMS personnel shall:

1. Don appropriate PPE before beginning cleanup.
2. Remove visible contamination using approved absorbent materials and disposable cleaning supplies.
3. Clean all affected surfaces with soap and water if necessary.
4. Disinfect contaminated surfaces using an EPA-registered disinfectant or agency-approved disinfecting product, following the manufacturer's recommended contact time.
5. Allow surfaces to air dry whenever possible.
6. Remove PPE carefully to avoid self-contamination.
7. Perform hand hygiene immediately after PPE removal.

All patient care equipment that becomes contaminated shall be cleaned and disinfected before being returned to service.

Vehicle Decontamination

At the completion of any call involving blood or bodily fluids:

- The patient compartment shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including stretcher rails, bench seats, cabinets, door handles, seat belts, monitors, radios, and reusable equipment shall be disinfected.
- Contaminated linens shall be handled as biohazardous laundry according to agency procedures.
- The ambulance shall not be placed back into service until decontamination is complete.

At the end of each shift, the patient compartment shall be swept, trash removed, and all patient contact surfaces disinfected regardless of patient contact volume.

Disposal of Biohazardous Waste

Biohazardous waste shall include any material contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious materials, including:

- Blood-soaked dressings
- Used gloves and PPE contaminated with body fluids
- Disposable suction canisters
- Contaminated disposable medical supplies

Biohazard waste shall be placed immediately into designated red biohazard bags or approved biohazard containers.

Sharps, including needles, lancets, scalpels, and other sharp medical devices, shall be disposed of immediately after use in an approved puncture-resistant sharps container. Sharps shall never be recapped, bent, broken, or intentionally manipulated by hand unless specifically required by approved medical procedure.

Exposure Incidents

Any employee experiencing an occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials shall:

- Immediately wash the affected area with soap and water or flush exposed mucous membranes with water.
- Notify the on-duty supervisor as soon as possible.
- Complete all required exposure documentation before the end of the shift whenever feasible.
- Follow agency exposure control procedures for medical evaluation and follow-up.

Documentation

Personnel shall report and document:

- Significant contamination of the ambulance or equipment.
- Occupational exposure incidents.
- Damaged or depleted PPE supplies.
- Any failure of cleaning or disinfection equipment.
- Biohazard disposal issues requiring supervisor attention.

Responsibility

All EMS personnel are responsible for:

- Following Standard Precautions at all times.
- Wearing appropriate PPE.
- Properly cleaning and disinfecting vehicles and equipment.
- Properly disposing of biohazardous waste.
- Reporting exposure incidents immediately.
- Maintaining a safe environment for patients, coworkers, and the public.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring adequate PPE, disinfecting supplies, and biohazard disposal materials are available and that all personnel comply with this policy.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action. Adherence to proper biohazard management procedures is essential to protect personnel, maintain regulatory compliance, reduce organizational liability, and ensure a safe environment for patient care.