

TOOLBOX TALK
NO.13

Needlestick Injuries



It is a sad fact that the drug culture affects the construction industry as much as other business sectors. The abuse of both legal and illegal drugs brings with the risk of discovering discarded hypodermic syringes or discarded needles.

If not handled in a safe manner, discarded needles can pose serious health risks to anyone whose skin is accidentally pricked. Blood on a needle could be infected with a hepatitis or HIV virus. All operatives are to assume that any needle they find has been used by a drug user and is potentially contaminated by infected blood. Please be very vigilant, particularly regarding the discovery of used hypodermic syringes.

Do not touch or move any needles or hypodermic syringes you may find, please ask a responsible person to guard it whilst reporting the matter to your supervisor.

If a needle or syringe must be moved, then suitable instructions might be:

- ✓ If possible, use a pair of pliers to pick it up
- ✓ Carry it with the needle pointing downwards
- ✓ Do not wrap it in paper or put it into a waste bin
- ✓ If available, place it in a sharps bin, or otherwise a clear glass bottle or jar
- ✓ Place the sharps bin, bottle or jar in a secure location
- ✓ Carefully follow site procedures regarding disposal
- ✓ Wash hands thoroughly.

Do NOT PANIC if you have punctured your skin with a needle. Gently squeeze the area around the wound to encourage bleeding but **do not suck** the wound. Wash the site of injury thoroughly with soap and water at the first opportunity and obtain medical assistance as soon as possible, inform either the site nurse or the nearest hospital with an Accident and Emergency Department (**the local Environment Health Department should be informed**). If you can do so safely, take the syringe or needle with you.

If dealt with properly and promptly, the risks of a resulting health problem are small.

REMEMBER IF YOU SUFFER A NEEDLESTICK INJURY AND DO NOT FOLLOW THIS GUIDANCE, YOU COULD BE EXPOSED TO THE HIV VIRUS, HEPATITIS B OR HEPATITIS C, ALL OF THEM VERY UNPLEASANT!

Questions: Due to the secretive nature of drug taking, where do you think you are most likely to find discarded needles?
What diseases do you think you could catch from needle



**SAFETY AS
STANDARD**