BIOLOGICAL AGENTS POLICY

[Organization Name] values the health and safety of its employees and has implemented this policy to provide employees with important information and procedures to control and prevent bloodborne pathogens and the risk of infections within the workplace. At all times, [Organization Name] will ensure that all employees adhere to the guidelines set forth by this policy, the British Columbia *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation,* WorkSafeBC, and any and all local and provincial public health guidelines or requirements that apply to our organization.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and volunteers who may be exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials while performing their job duties.

DEFINITIONS

**Occupational exposure**: Reasonably anticipated harmful contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIMs) that may result from the performance of a worker’s duties.

**Biological agents**: Pathogenic microorganisms present in human blood and OPIMs that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include but are not limited to the hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

**Harmful contact**: An exposure incident to blood or OPIMs through:

* Percutaneous injury (injury through the skin from a contaminated sharp item such as a needle)
* Contact with the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth
* Contact with non-intact skin (healing wound less than three days old or lesion causing disruption of outer skin layer)
* Bites

Source: [WorkSafeBC](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/exposure-control-plans/exposure-control-plan-for-infectious-disease-for-occupational-first-aid-attendants?lang=en)

POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to protect workers from the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens, such as HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C, by establishing procedures and protocols to prevent, control, and respond to incidents of exposure.

The Organization will:

* Conduct a risk identification and assessment of an employee’s potential occupational
exposure to biological agents.
* Implement engineering controls, safe work practices, and written work procedures to
eliminate or reduce potential employee exposure to biological agents.
* Provide employees with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), ensure that it is accessible and available at the workplace and train employees on how to properly use the PPE.
* Ensure employees are provided with education and training on biological agents and the exposure control plan for the workplace.
* Provide employees with the hepatitis B vaccination at no cost (upon request).
* Ensure that all pertinent health and safety records are maintained.
* Establish a system to ensure that employees who have had an exposure incident to blood or OPIMs are medically evaluated, then seen by a physician for follow-up if deemed necessary by the medical evaluation.
* Ensure that investigations of employee exposure incidents to blood or OPIMs are conducted and corrective actions are taken to prevent similar incidents from occurring.
* Review the exposure control plan annually and update it as necessary.
* Provide first aid kits and all relevant equipment.
* Provide Sharps Disposal Containers and ensure the location of the closest Sharps Disposal Container is known by all employees for discarding disposable, contaminated sharp items.
* Provide the appropriate hand-washing facilities and eye-wash stations.
* Ensure supervisors have been trained on monitoring employees and visitors to ensure policies and procedures are being adhered to.
* Ensure that employees have a clear line of communication to express concerns they may have about health and safety in the workplace.
* Continuously monitor for bloodborne pathogens/infections related information from the regional public health officials and the provincial health officer related to the organization’s area and industry and following that guidance and direction should additional measures be necessary in the workplace.

Supervisor(s) will:

* Supervise employees with respect to biological agent hazards.
* Ensure that employees utilise engineering controls and follow safe work practices and written work procedures.
* Ensure that employees properly wear appropriate PPE.
* Ensure that employees receive education, training, and refresher training on biological agents and the exposure control plan.
* Ensure that the post-exposure health management procedure is followed for employee exposure incidents to blood or OPIMs.
* Initiate investigations of exposure incidents to blood or OPIMs.
* Ensure Sharps disposal containers are securely closed and replaced when they are two-thirds full.
* Ensure that all contaminated waste is disposed of appropriately.
* Ensure that employees are trained to utilise hand-washing equipment and facilities as well as eye-wash stations if needed.

Employees will:

* Utilise the provided engineering controls.
* Follow safe work practices and written work procedures.
* Wear the appropriate PPE provided.
* Attend education and training (occupational first aid training courses and additional company training sessions).
* Follow the post-exposure health management procedure in the event of an exposure incident to blood or OPIMs.
* Participate in investigations of exposure incidents to blood or OPIMs.
* Maintain good hygiene procedures including regular hand-washing.