

>> TOOLBOX TALK – Needle stick & sharp object injuries

Explain Dangers

Occasionally workers may encounter needles, syringes, or razors on the job. Certain workplaces may be at a higher risk of encountering these types of hazards. They include:

- housing or shelter projects;
- public washrooms;
- the bottom of elevator shafts;
- marijuana grow-operations; and
- landscaping or forestry operations.



The main risk to workers who have a needle stick injury is exposure to viruses such as hepatitis B and C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

- **Hepatitis B** is an illness that affects the liver. It causes liver inflammation, vomiting, and jaundice. Over the long term, it can cause scarring of the liver and liver cancer. It can eventually lead to death.
- **Hepatitis C** also affects the liver and can cause fever, loss of appetite, fatigue, and jaundice. Over longer periods of time, it causes scar tissue and liver failure. Some people may have no symptoms for many years but can still infect others.
- **HIV** is a virus that attacks the immune system, causing infection. When the body can't fight infections anymore, the disease becomes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Identify Controls

Use adequate lighting when working in dark areas to avoid any accidental contact with used needles or other sharp objects. Accidental contact with used needles can be avoided by following some simple procedures:

- If you find a needle or syringe, always assume it is contaminated.
- Before picking up the needle, notify your supervisor for direction. If your supervisor is not nearby, have another worker get the supervisor. Never leave the needle alone.
- Use a strong container (glass, metal, or durable plastic such as a peanut butter jar) or any other puncture proof container.
- Open the lid of the container and bring it close to the needle(s) or object(s). This will minimize the distance you have to carry the material.
- Use pliers, tongs, or tweezers to pick up the needle, syringe, or glass stem. Never use your hands.
- Hold the needle tip away from you at all times.
- Put the needle, syringe, or glass stem in the container and close the lid securely.
- Do not dispose of needles in the garbage.

Many municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador have needle disposal sites. Used needles should be dropped off at these designated locations. Your company may also have some other arrangement for disposal. The Safe Works Access Program in St. John's and Corner Brook also offer a pickup service. In other locations contact your municipality for further direction.

What to do if you accidentally prick yourself

1. Let the wound bleed; 2. Flush the area with water or wash with soap and water. If the skin has been broken, apply a topical antiseptic solution (e.g., iodine, isopropyl alcohol); 3. Do not apply disinfectants to the eyes, nose, or mouth; 4. Bandage the wound; and 5. Seek immediate medical attention at the hospital emergency department.

Complete and attach Toolbox Meeting Form and process as per company policy.

Content adapted for NLCSA, with permission, from toolbox talk by the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association.
(Source re needle disposal: CBC News article)



TOOLBOX MEETING FORM

Date: _____ Project: _____

Supervisor: _____ No. in Crew: _____ No. Attending: _____

Review Last Meeting:

	Names of Attendees (Signature Required)
Topics Discussed (policies, practices, procedures, hazard assessment):	
Suggestions Offered:	
Action(s) to be Taken:	
Injuries/Accidents Reviewed:	

Supervisor's Remarks: _____

Signature: _____