



LAW ENFORCEMENT NEEDLE STICKS

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By Troy Pitcock, Law Enforcement Loss Control Consultant, Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services

In these tough times law enforcement officers currently face one of the more serious dangers - needle sticks. According to a study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, one in 50,000 officers in the United States is killed by a firearm while one in three will suffer a wound from a syringe. A contaminated needle can expose an officer to HIV or hepatitis A, B & C. It is estimated that 60-80% of injection drug users have hepatitis C. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the actual risk of an exposure resulting in a conversion is very low but that doesn't reduce the stress or anxiety to an officer after a stick.

The Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services (KLCIS) has noticed a significant rise in needle sticks to our law enforcement officers over the last few months, likely due to the increased abuse of heroin in the commonwealth.

Preventative Measures to Consider:

- ♦ When dealing with the potential of needles or sharp objects **slow down**. Don't be in a hurry. Time is on your side.
- ♦ Ask all suspects if they have any needles or sharp objects prior to searching. Trust no one!

- ♦ Avoid reaching your hand anywhere unseen (pockets, under seats, etc.):
 - * Utilize a flashlight.
 - * During a pat down utilize needle-resistant gloves.
 - * If you feel an item in a pocket attempt to pull the pocket up instead of reaching into a blind area.
 - * Utilize portable hand wands.
- ♦ Treat any located needles with extreme caution.
- ♦ When picking up needles from the ground:
 - * Utilize specially designed devices and follow directions on usage.
 - * Utilize needle-nose pliers and exercise caution if only a needle portion remains.
- ♦ Place any located needles in a syringe holder or sharps container.
- ♦ Follow departmental policy and protocol.
- ♦ Don't recap any needles. This is very dangerous and leads to a higher number of sticks.
- ♦ Ensure all vaccines are up to date.



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- ◆ Continually wash hands and utilize hand sanitizer.
- ◆ If you experience a needle stick:
 - * Clean the area with soap and water;
 - * Notify your supervisor; and
 - * Notify Company Nurse immediately for advice on medical treatment at 855-339-1889.
- ◆ All personnel should review the KLCIS Monthly Claims Awareness e-blast for current trends. Being



aware of current injury trends has proven to reduce exposures and injuries.

Law enforcement officers encounter new challenges every day and the increasing use of drug needles is one more concern. Being prepared and aware of what to do are key in both protecting the public and themselves.

With questions or feedback, contact Troy Pitcock at 502-376-4027 (tpitcock@klc.org) or Brian Nunn at 502-664-8110 (bnunn@klc.org) with KLCIS Loss Control Law Enforcement or visit klcis.org for more information.



Troy Pitcock

Questions? KLCIS is here to help!

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Brian Nunn