



## OPIOID-RELATED EXPOSURES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

May 2018

*By Brian Numm, Law Enforcement Loss Control Consultant,  
Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services*

In 2016, the Kentucky League of Cities produced a Blue Paper detailing the increased number of needlesticks that law enforcement officers were experiencing throughout the Commonwealth, as well as the nation. This can be found at [www.klcis.org/UserFiles/files/KLCIS\\_NeedleSticks16\\_16.pdf](http://www.klcis.org/UserFiles/files/KLCIS_NeedleSticks16_16.pdf). In close relation to this issue is the potential for law enforcement exposure to opioid and opioid derivatives such as heroin, fentanyl and carfentanyl. With that in mind, please be aware of the following:

### Causes of Exposure

- Needle sticks - Officers should utilize puncture-resistant gloves whenever possible and never search where they cannot see. Additionally, sharps containers should be available in every police vehicle. With that in mind, never attempt to recap a needle - this is when a large majority of exposures take place.
- Direct contact with the skin - Again, wear gloves when possible. Nitrile gloves are recommended when recovering evidence or searching a person.
- Airborne exposures - This is a very common form of exposure and possibly the hardest to immediately detect. Airborne exposures often occur during residence and vehicle searches. A recent example is an exposure to an officer that occurred while searching a suspect's purse. When an area to be searched is known to contain opioid derivatives such as fentanyl or fentanyl analogs, please wear appropriate PPE (at a minimum gloves and a dust mask, although a more advanced breathing apparatus is recommended).



### Symptoms of Exposure

As officers are often unaware that an exposure has occurred, please be aware of the following symptoms:

- Dizziness or drowsiness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headaches
- Sweating
- Respiratory distress
- Loss of consciousness

### What to Do if Exposed

- Seek medical attention immediately. As previously discussed, officers are often unaware that they have been exposed, so it is critical that we take care of each other and are aware of possible exposures by our co-workers.

# OPIOID-RELATED EXPOSURES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

- Call 911 - Most medical units are better equipped to deal with exposures than the typical police vehicle. Immediate and timely care is paramount, so do not hesitate to call on a possible exposure.
- Narcan - It is recommended that every officer be equipped with Narcan. This is the fastest way to reverse the effects of an opioid exposure and is also effective on K9 units. The KLC model policy for use of Narcan can be found at [www.klcis.org/UserFiles/Files/POLICY-Narcotic\\_Overdose-Intranasal\\_Naloxone\\_10\\_12\\_2016.doc](http://www.klcis.org/UserFiles/Files/POLICY-Narcotic_Overdose-Intranasal_Naloxone_10_12_2016.doc).
- KLCIS also recommends that each officer keeps a change of clothes in his or her assigned vehicle in case of exposure.

In conclusion, please keep in mind that law enforcement exposures to opioid and opioid derivatives are likely to increase as our Commonwealth and country continue

to battle the current epidemic. Additionally, fentanyl has recently been found in laboratory reports mixed with cocaine, methamphetamine, pharmaceutical pills and marijuana. A recent KLCIS training video regarding exposures and needlesticks can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIHJyd6O3uA&](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIHJyd6O3uA&).

Please remember that the information contained in this Blue Paper is not all inclusive, but is merely a guide regarding possible law enforcement opioid exposures. All KLCIS model policies, and all associated forms, are available at [KLC.org](http://KLC.org).

With questions or feedback contact Troy Pitcock at 502.376.4027 ([tpitcock@klc.org](mailto:tpitcock@klc.org)), Brian Nunn at 502.664.8110 ([bnunn@klc.org](mailto:bnunn@klc.org)) or Mark Filburn at 859.327.9750 ([mfilburn@klc.org](mailto:mfilburn@klc.org)) for more information on exposures, or any other law enforcement issue.



## Questions? KLCIS is here to help!

Please contact Mark Filburn ([mfilburn@klc.org](mailto:mfilburn@klc.org)) or Brian Nunn ([bnunn@klc.org](mailto:bnunn@klc.org)) with KLCIS Loss Control Law Enforcement at 800.876.4552 or visit [klcis.org](http://klcis.org) for more information.



Mark Filburn



Brian Nunn