

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

(Needlestick Rule)

Over the last couple of years it is evident that OSHA has concentrated on giving employees more safety responsibility within its General Industry Standards/Statutes. The changes OSHA has adopted in its Bloodborne Standard allows employees input in both the assessment and implementation of this new standard.

“OSHA has revised its bloodborne pathogens standard to clarify the need for employers to select safer needle devices as they become available and to involve employees in identifying and choosing the devices. The updated standard also requires employers to maintain a log of injuries from contaminated sharps.” (www.OSHA.gov)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that if safer medical devices were used, 6% to 88% of sharps injuries occurring in hospital settings could be prevented. This shows that progress can and is being made by manufacturers to ensure that safe, easy-to-use devices are available for the medical industry. OSHA has taken medical safety precautions a step further.

There is a two-step formula that the standard lays out:

- The first step is the annual review of the employer’s exposure control plan. A medical facility is mandated to consider safer needle devices during the annual review. Employees that use the needle devices are also to be involved in reviewing existing devices and possible alternatives.
- The second step in preventing needlesticks is an accurate and comprehensive log of needlestick injuries. This record will show how many needlesticks occur each year in a medical facility and can aid in determining the effectiveness of existing devices.

The new bloodborne pathogens standard goes into effect on April 18, 2001. SafeAssure has taken the steps necessary to ensure that each of you will be brought to compliance with this rule change by this date. Thank you for your cooperation and any questions or comments are welcome regarding this new rule or any of your safety concerns. . .WORK SAFELY!