

Needlestick Safety & Prevention Act Effective April 18, 2001

In November 2000, President Clinton signed into law the Federal Needlestick Protection Act. According to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, there are more than 380,000 needlestick injuries annually from contaminated sharps in the hospital setting. A reported 800,000 needlestick injuries recorded annually among all healthcare workers. The CDC also reported that 62%-88% of sharps injuries could be potentially prevented by using sharps with engineered safety medical devices. The Federal law is effective on April 18, 2001.

This new law makes changes to the existing 1991 Occupational Exposure to Blood Borne Pathogens. The modification falls into four major areas:

- Change in definitions on engineering controls
- Revision and updating of the exposure control plan
- Solicitation of employee input
- Record keeping

The new law states that all healthcare workers must use and consider the use of effective engineering controls, including safer medical devices in order to reduce the risk of needlestick injuries. This includes self sheathing syringes, retractable needles, blunting needles and shielded needles.

The OSHA Exposure Control Plan must now reflect changes in technology that eliminate or reduce exposure to blood borne pathogens. There must be annual documentation of evaluation and implementation of appropriate commercial safe medical devices. Employers must implement the use of safer medical devices that are appropriate, commercially available and effective.

The Exposure Control Plan must solicit input from non-managerial employees responsible for direct patient who are potentially exposed to needlestick injuries. The employees must have input in the identification, evaluation and selection of the needle protective devices.

The Needlestick Safety Prevention Act also requires employers to maintain a log recording percutaneous injuries from contaminated sharps. The log must contain the following information:

- The type and brand of device
- The department where the injury occurred

An explanation of how the incident occurred

These changes are effective April 18, 2001 and recognize the government's concern over needlestick injuries. To obtain further information and a copy of the Regulation go to

www.osha-slc.gov/needlesticks