

LAW ENFORCEMENT NEEDLE STICKS

April 2022



Law enforcement officers face significant danger in these tough times - 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 exposure resulting in conversion is very low, but that doesn't reduce the stress or anxiety of an officer after a stick.

The Kentucky League of Cities Insurance has noticed a significant rise in needle sticks to our law enforcement officers, likely due to the ongoing problem of heroin abuse in the commonwealth.

Preventative Measures:

- 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 before searching. Trust no one!
- Avoid reaching your hand anywhere unseen (pockets, under seats, etc.).
 - Utilize a flashlight;
 - Wear needle-resistant gloves;
 - Attempt to pull a pocket up instead of reaching into it blindly; and
 - Use a portable hand wand.



- Treat any located needles with extreme caution.
- When picking up needles from the ground:
 - Use a specially designed device and follow directions on its proper usage; and
 - Use 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.
- 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.



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All personnel should review the [KLC Claims Awareness Law Enforcement Summary](#) for current trends. Being aware of what other officers are encountering has proven to reduce exposures and injuries.

Law enforcement officers face 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.



Questions? KLC is here to help!

Please contact Mark Filburn (mfilburn@klc.org) or Brian Nunn (bnunn@klc.org) with KLC Loss Control Law Enforcement at 800.876.4552 or visit klc.org for more information.



Mark Filburn



Brian Nunn