

Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

#149-5/7/13

A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

TOPIC: SAFETY – AEROSOL TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASE

This is a relatively new, and remarkably complex, State standard designed to address workers in high-risk environments due to exposure to aerosol transmissible pathogens/disease (ATD). The most common workers affected would be in the health services, but police services, the county jails, certain types of laboratories, animal control, and fire departments might also be included due to their potential exposure to ATDs. There is no definitive list of aerosol transmissible pathogens, but it would certainly include influenza, tuberculosis, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and pertussis.

Cal/OSHA has different requirements based on the level of contact with individuals suspected of having an airborne infectious disease. One standard is for a “referring employer” (one who does not diagnose, treat, transport, house, isolate or manage cases) who transfers or directs possible ATD cases to another facility, service, or operation. Cal/OSHA requires a referring employer to have:

- Written infection control procedures – reviewed at least annually;
- Written source control procedures;
- Written procedures for screening and referral of cases;
- Written procedures for risk reduction of transmission of ATDs;
- A system of medical services including vaccinations;
- Training on an annual basis;
- Records on training, vaccination, exposure incidents, and records of inspection, testing, and maintenance of non-disposable engineering controls.

The second standard is for employers with ATD exposures that do not fit the definition of a “referring employer.” These other employers are required to:

- Have a written ATD exposure control plan specific to the workplace;
- Use feasible engineering and work practice controls to minimize employee exposures to ATD;
- Provide NIOSH-approved respirators;
- Provide medical services including vaccinations, examinations, evaluations, tests, and medical follow-up for their exposed workers;
- Conduct annual training; and
- Establish and maintain records on training, medical procedures, and implementation of the plan.

As stated above, Cal/OSHA’s Aerosol Transmissible Disease requirements are complex, and complicated. Creating, implementing, and maintaining this program will potentially require professional assistance beyond YCPARMIA’s expertise. It should be understood that the ATD exposure for our members is potentially significant. On an annual basis YCPARMIA member employees submit at least a dozen workers’ compensation claims for various exposures to ATDs; fortunately very few have actually contracted the diseases that they were exposed to.

Next Topic: Safety – Hazardous Materials