



FITNESS CENTER EXPOSURES

Keeping Employee and Patrons Safe

For: Athletic Republic

Date:

Conducted by:

Operators of fitness centers must take many hazards into account—both for their employees and the patrons using their facility. To combat the hazards for employees, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has implemented a Bloodborne Pathogens regulation (29 CFR 1910.1030) to help protect workers from the transmission of bloodborne diseases within certain occupations. Fitness facility owners and managers must comply with the rules of this regulation in addition to taking the necessary measures to protect patrons from illness and injury.

EMPLOYEE EXPOSURES

Workers typically fall within three different exposure categories based on their routine duties. They are as follows:

- Employees who routinely do tasks involving blood, bodily fluids or tissues such as cleaning up after a bloody nose. This may include athletic trainers, custodians or lifeguards.
- Employees whose normal routine does not involve exposure to blood, bodily fluid or tissues, but who may be required to assist in a task that involves exposure. This may include fitness center employees, service workers or coaches.
- Employees whose routine duties do not include tasks involving exposure. These employees are not called upon to assist in medical care or first aid, such as administrative staff.

All employees who have a reasonable chance of coming in contact with blood, bodily fluid or tissues should receive training, as outlined by the Bloodborne Pathogens OSHA standard. This training should cover (at minimum):

- Explanation of the OSHA standard
- Symptoms of bloodborne pathogens
- Modes of transmission
- Your facility's exposure control plan
- Methods of recognizing exposure tasks involving blood
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE), engineering controls and safe work practices
- Vaccination options
- Emergency incident procedures
- Evaluation and accident investigations
- Signage and labeling

PRECAUTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR EMPLOYEES

In addition, take the following considerations into account to protect your employees:

- Instruct employees to consider all contact with body fluids to be potentially infectious. This may include: vaginal secretions, semen, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva or any other body fluid that is contaminated with blood.
- To decontaminate surfaces and equipment, use a solution with at least 10 percent chlorine bleach. Decontaminate surfaces immediately upon contact with fluids.
- Decontaminate equipment and inspect said equipment before allowing patrons to use again.
- Employees should wash their hands or other exposed skin with soap and water or flush mucous membranes with water as soon as possible following an exposure incident.
- Employees should wash their hands immediately after removing PPE. PPE should also not leave the work area.
- Place PPE in a designated area while it is stored, washed, decontaminated or discarded.
- Torn, punctured and contaminated PPE should be discarded and replaced immediately upon discovery.
- Employees should not eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics or handle contact lenses in work areas where potential exposure may occur.
- Medical waste should be placed in sturdy containers that are constructed to prevent leakage during handling, storage, transportation or shipping. The containers should be labeled and color-coded properly.
- If an employee is exposed to blood, bodily fluids or tissues, the affected person should go immediately to a hospital for further evaluation and potential treatment. The incident should be documented in both the employee's personnel file and on an incident report. The employee's direct supervisor should also be notified as soon as possible.
- Incident reporting should be commonplace for all tasks that involve exposure. The following should be noted:
 - Route of exposure and how it occurred
 - Source of body fluid
 - Severity of exposure
 - Follow-up medical care (if any)
 - Written documentation from the treating physician regarding the physical status of the exposed employee

PRECAUTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR PATRONS

Owners and operators of fitness centers should also take the following precautions into consideration with regard to their patrons. This will ensure their safety and waive potential liability in the event of an accident:

- Provide a detailed handbook of fitness center rules for each member of the facility and require that individuals sign an acknowledgement statement for the handbook.

- Require members to have a physician's approval before using the facility.
- Require members to sign a release of liability statement before using the facility equipment.
- Document all incidents involving patrons, regardless of the severity.
- Do not allow new members to use equipment before attending an orientation session.

COVERAGES TO CONSIDER

These coverages will provide protection against many fitness center exposures:

- Workers' Compensation—for employee injuries occurring during the course of employment. Your state's workers' compensation statute should be reviewed to determine if an injury in an employee-sponsored fitness center is a covered injury.
- General Liability—When hiring an independent contractor to operate in an employer-sponsored facility, make sure the contractor has a certificate of insurance with a general liability limit of at least \$1 million with incidental medical malpractice coverage and adds the employer as an additional insured. If a professional healthcare provider (such as a physical therapist) is working in the facility, he or she would require medical malpractice coverage, not just incidental coverage. The contractor's insurance should also be primary coverage.
- Occurrence Policy—Coverage for incidents occurring previously, such as a patron hurting themselves on your equipment and complaining of the problem several years later.
- Professional Liability—Coverage for negligence on the part of your employees acting on your behalf. This may include dietitians, athletic trainers or physical therapists.
- Business Income and Extra Expense Coverage—If your facility needs to close for a period of time due to a fire, flood or other problem, this coverage allows you to relocate your facility temporarily so you do not lose your valued members.

There are other coverages to consider that may be specific to your facility. Contact us today to discuss your options.