



Biohazard Cleanup in Public Housing Settings

Staff members of public housing authorities face situations involving deceased residents, major accidents, and in some cases, crime scenes with bodily fluids. It is important that leaders in the public housing industry properly prepare for these situations by having written plans and policies that provide directions to staff. Inform the employees of the policies and train them on how to handle potentially infectious material while protecting themselves and other residents. The Safety Director offers the following advice.

Start with identifying situations that could potentially expose staff to biological hazards. In this bulletin, we will concentrate on two situations. One, a resident passing away in a unit, and two a violent crime scene on housing property. However, other situations such as extreme hoarding, unit skip outs with leftover materials, infestations, or vandalism. OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogen Standard and Public Housing regulations are important reference documents when developing a written plan and policy.

A public housing authority's plan should initiate specific actions a staff member should take when being notified of a situation possibly involving a biological hazard. Notification may start with a family member's request to conduct a welfare check on a resident. The best practice is for the staff member to attempt to contact the tenant by phone and/or email, first. If the staff member does not get a reply from the call or email, they should then knock on the door, but they should not enter the residence without police present. If there still is no response, notify the property manager and the local police. Once the police arrive, the staff member may key into the unit. If the resident has passed away, it is a crime scene. In this situation, follow the directions of law enforcement.

Authorities may also be notified by police of another possible biohazard situation when a violent crime or unattended death has occurred on their property. Often bodily fluids will be present and the property owner will need to be clean. How a housing authority handles this situation will depend on their plan and policies, the staff's abilities and training, as well as, the extensiveness of the bodily fluid contamination at the scene.

For example, if a resident passed away in bed or a chair and was found and removed quickly from the residence, staff may be able to safely clean the unit by following basic safety precautions such as wearing rubber gloves, masks, and safety glasses. However, if the deceased individual is undiscovered for an extended time, the biological contamination may be too extensive for staff members. In this situation, the housing authority will engage a qualified vendor. Authorities should maintain a list of qualified vendors. Each housing authority will need to evaluate its ability to handle significant biological clean-ups and develop a written plan and policy. Educate staff on their responsibilities and limitations.

Train employees who are involved at any level of cleaning or disposal of biological hazards in accordance with OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogen Standard. MSI LIVE or MSI NOW can provide much of this training.

Please contact the Office of the Safety Director if further guidance.