Retail Tagger Safety Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Tagging guns used to attach price, brand, and information tags on clothing and other goods in the garment industry and retail establishments pose a bloodborne pathogen hazard to the workers that use them if they get stuck with the needles. Workers need to know the risks of using tagging guns and needles and take precautions to avoid bloodborne pathogen exposures.

TAG ATTACHMENT GUN PROCEDURE

Employees in the garment industry use tag attachment guns (a device which puts the price tags onto garments). The procedure used with these guns is common in the industry and occurs across the country, and employees are being stuck on a regular basis; it appears to be a recognized hazard in the industry.

There is potential for employees to be stuck, and actual exposure on an anticipated level. The issue of concern relating the bloodborne pathogen standard is that these needle guns can retain blood in the hollow needle and on the tool. The needle itself, which actually penetrates the skin, would be reasonably anticipated to involve the presence of blood or other potentially infectious material. When guns are exchanged between employees, e.g., during shift changes, the result is a potential transmission of bloodborne pathogens.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease in humans. The organisms that are medically crucial within health and safety are those that are transmitted person-to-person, such as Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV), and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

There is no population that is risk free for human immunodeficiency virus or hepatitis B virus infectivity, any employee who has occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material is included within the scope of this standard. Employees in the garment industry are generally considered to have occupational exposure.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

DANGERS OF TAGGER GUN USE AND BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

- Possible serious hazards from bloodborne pathogens associated with sharing tagging guns when instruments are not disinfected.
- A worker that uses a tagger gun on the job may get stuck accidentally with the needle. You are at risk of a bloodborne pathogen exposure if you and others use the same tagging gun and also get stuck accidentally with the same needle. If this happens, you have been exposed to the blood of other workers and any potential bloodborne pathogens that may be in their blood such as hepatitis B and HIV. This occurs when one worker accidentally punctures his or her skin with the needle of a tagging gun and another worker using the same gun, with the same needle, sustains the same type of injury.
- In the garment manufacturing or processing industry or other manufacturing settings there is very frequent use of a tagging gun. In the retail industry tagger guns are used less frequently. Either way, there is a “reasonably anticipated exposure to blood” with a tagger and your employer is responsible for controlling this hazard.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

AVOID INFECTIONS BLOOD – PREVENTION

Blood-borne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Needle sticks and other sharps-related injuries may expose workers to blood-borne pathogens.

Take **“universal precautions,”** which means treating all blood and blood-containing materials as though they do actually contain blood-borne pathogens. Prevention includes:

- regular hand washing
- wearing protective clothing such as latex gloves when dealing with an injured person
- avoid poking yourself with the needle from tagging guns.
- take care if handing garbage bags to ensure no sharp objects are protruding from the bag.

WHEN A WORKER GETS A NEEDLESTICK USING A TAGGER GUN

- Immediately wash the area with soap and water.
- Use antiseptic cleaner until you get to soap and water ASAP.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you are in doubt about the cleanliness of the needle.
- Medical Treatment may include hepatitis B vaccination and drug therapy.
- To be effective, this medical treatment should be within 24 hours of exposure.
- Immediately report a needlestick to your employer.

SAFETY STEPS IN TAGGER OPERATIONS

- make it a policy for workers clean and disinfect tagger needles often each use.
- issue new needles to workers for each use.
- assign each employee their own tagger and needle.
- if a worker is issued their own tagger gun, only use your own gun, and do not share it with other workers.
- get training on bloodborne pathogens, exposures, and learn the potential health consequences of violating clear needle policy.

BEST PRACTICES USE OF TAGGER GUNS

- Make sure to watch what you are doing and know where your hands are at all times.
- Tag clothing and materials away from your body.
- Use a firm surface to tag against.
- If you cannot see where you are holding the tagger and needle, reposition the work and use the tagger where you can see it and your hands.

FINAL WORD

In the garment manufacturing or processing industry or other manufacturing settings there is very frequent use of a tagging gun. In the retail industry tagger guns are used less frequently. Either way, there is a “reasonably anticipated exposure to blood” with a tagger and your employer is responsible for controlling this hazard.