

CDC Issues Interim Ebola Guidance for Wastewater Workers

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued interim guidance for workers handling untreated sewage that comes from hospitals, medical facilities, and other facilities with confirmed Ebola patients. The guidance provides recommendations on the types of personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used and proper hygiene for the safe handling of untreated sewage that may contain Ebola virus.

Workers who come in contact with untreated sewage before it enters the wastewater treatment plant could be at very low risk of exposure to Ebola virus, according to the guidelines. These workers include:

- Plumbers in hospitals that are currently treating an Ebola patient
- Sewer maintenance workers working on the active sewer lines serving the hospital with an Ebola patient
- Construction workers who repair or replace active sewer lines serving the hospital with an Ebola patient

Although there has been no evidence to date that Ebola can be transmitted via exposure to sewage, the guidelines were developed for hygiene practices and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to prevent exposure to potential pathogens when working with untreated sewage.

The following PPE is recommended for workers handling untreated sewage:

- Goggles or face shield: to protect eyes from splashes of untreated sewage
- Face mask (e.g., surgical mask): to protect nose and mouth from splashes of human waste. If undertaking cleaning processes that generate aerosols, a NIOSH-approved N-95 respirator should be used.
- Impermeable or fluid-resistant coveralls: to keep untreated sewage off clothing
- Waterproof gloves (such as heavy-duty rubber outer gloves with nitrile inner gloves) to prevent exposure of hands to untreated sewage
- Rubber boots: to prevent exposure of feet to untreated sewage.

Basic Hygiene Practices

- Wash skin with soap and water immediately after handling sewage, or any materials that have been in contact with sewage.
- Avoid touching face, mouth, eyes, nose, or open sores and cuts while handling sewage, or any materials that have been in contact with sewage.
- Wash hands with soap and water before eating or drinking after handling sewage.
- Remove soiled work clothes and do not take home to launder. Launder clothing at work or use a uniform service.
- Eat in designated areas away from untreated sewage.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco or gum while handling human waste or sewage, or any materials that have been in contact with human waste or sewage.
- Cover open sores, cuts, and wounds with clean, dry bandages.