

HANDLING LAUNDRY POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED WITH BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

In the context of OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogen standard, contaminated laundry means laundry (i.e., bedding, towels, wash clothes, lab coats, coveralls, aprons, gowns, etc.) which has been soiled with blood or other potentially infectious materials or may contain contaminated sharps. Contaminated laundry must be handled and laundered as described below. UNL's Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan provides more detail regarding definitions for bloodborne pathogens, potentially infectious materials, universal precautions, etc.

General Handling Precautions

- Observe Universal Precautions when handling all soiled laundry; and train all employees' to recognize contaminated laundry containers. If universal precautions are not used when handling all soiled laundry:
 - Potentially contaminated laundry must be placed in color-coded (red) and labeled (biohazard symbol) containers.
- At a minimum, employees shall wear protective gloves, appropriate eye protection, and outer garments when handling contaminated laundry. Personal protective equipment will be considered appropriate only if it does not permit blood or other potentially infectious materials to pass through or reach the employee's work clothes, street clothes, undergarments, skin, eyes, mouth, or other mucous membranes under normal conditions of use and for the duration of the time which the protective equipment will be used.
- Handle contaminated laundry as little as possible and with minimum agitation.
- Containerize contaminated laundry at the location of use. The container selected must prevent soak-through and/or leakage of fluids to the exterior.

Management of Laundry In-house

- Employees responsible for handling/laundrying contaminated laundry are required to participate in the UNL Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Program. This includes training (initial and annual refresher), as well as immunizations and other protective measures.
- Do not launder, rinse, sort, etc., laundry at the location of use. Conduct these activities at the designated washing facility/area.
- Laundering agents (e.g., bleach) should be effective in inactivating bloodborne pathogens.

Use of outside laundry service

If an outside laundry service is used for handling contaminated laundry, it is the responsibility of the department to:

- Inform the laundry contractor that laundry may be contaminated with bloodborne pathogens.
- Verify with the laundry service provider that they require their employees to observe universal precautions when handling contaminated laundry.
- If the service provide does not require employees to observe universal precautions when handling all soiled laundry, then potentially contaminated laundry must be placed in color-coded (red) and labeled (biohazard symbol) containers.

Disposal of laundry

If laundry (bedding, towels, wash clothes, lab coats, coveralls, aprons, gowns) are no longer going to be used but are potentially contaminated with Bloodborne Pathogens, then these items should be autoclaved. If an autoclave is not available, chemical treatment with proper chemical and effective concentration of chemical (10% freshly made bleach) is recommended.