



Wastewater and Ebola

For Hospital Officials and Medical Professionals

1/15/2015

Safe handling of Ebola-contaminated wastewater for facilities served by a municipal wastewater collection and treatment system

The Ebola virus is rapidly destroyed by exposure to disinfectants, sewage, and the wastewater treatment process. We've identified measures you can take to protect employees who may be working in the sewage collection system that serves your facility.

We recommend the following steps:

1. Add the work and after-hours phone numbers of your sewer utility provider to your emergency call list.
2. Discuss your procedures and communication plan with the sewer utility manager. Make sure hospital facility workers such as plumbers who work with wastewater have the same information.
3. Notify the sewer utility provider immediately if you start treating a suspected or confirmed Ebola patient.
4. The utility may direct you to pre-treat Ebola patient waste in order to protect workers who enter the collection piping (sewers). A typical approach for this pretreatment is described below.
 - When emptying a bedpan or disposing of other patient waste, add about ½ cup of household bleach or an alternative disinfectant such as a quaternary ammonia compound. Do not combine disinfectants. Add the disinfectant to the toilet and let stand for five minutes before flushing. If the patient's condition doesn't allow a five-minute hold, add additional disinfectant, up to one cup.
 - Lab waste containing chemicals or blood should be disposed of using normal protocols for such waste. Any waste disposed through a sink or toilet should be treated with a small amount of disinfectant, but be careful about mixing disinfectants with other chemicals.
5. Solid wastes (gowns, towels, gloves, sharps, etc.) cannot be discarded into the sewer system. Those materials must be discarded through the hospital medical waste program for solid waste.
6. If the sewer utility requests information on the patient's prior locations, refer the question to the local health jurisdiction.
7. Periodically check the Washington Department of Health webpage for updated information.

Posted at: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/Ebola>
(under "More Resources" in right hand column.)



Wastewater and Ebola For Sewer and Wastewater Treatment Utilities and Professionals

1/15/2015

Safe handling of possibly Ebola-contaminated wastewater when serving a medical facility

The Ebola virus is rapidly destroyed by exposure to disinfectants, raw sewage, and the wastewater treatment process. Ebola in wastewater is not a greater threat than other pathogens that may be discharged from a hospital and sewer workers dealing with a hospital wastewater should always wear appropriate personal protective equipment. However, worker concerns specific to this pathogen are understandable and Ebola exposure may be a particular concern if sewer workers are working immediately downstream of a hospital discharge.

These are recommendations for employers of workers who must enter the sewer - collection system near a facility that is treating a suspected or confirmed Ebola patient.

We recommend that you:

1. Ensure all medical facilities you serve have your 24/7 call number for utility notification purposes.
2. Contact the medical facility to learn about the wastewater disposal methods they'll be using.
3. If notified of an active case, the best option is to reschedule sewer collection work in the areas downstream of the medical facility for the duration of the Ebola patient treatment period.
4. If sewer work close to the hospital is unavoidable, you may choose to direct the hospital to disinfect prior to discharge during the time your employees are working in the sewers.
5. Review your bloodborne/waterborne pathogen program with your employees and contact Washington State Department of Labor and Industries if you have questions.
6. If you need information on the patient's prior locations, contact your local health jurisdiction.
7. Share the Washington Department of Health's recommended guidance for medical professionals and clinics with your local medical community.
8. Periodically check the Department of Health Ebola webpage for updated information.