

Overview

Emergency Service Workers (ESWs) – fire fighters, paramedics, and police – are at an increased risk of being exposed to possible communicable diseases through the course of their regular duties. These diseases include, but are not limited to:

- Bloodborne Diseases
 - Hepatitis B
 - Hepatitis C
 - HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)
- Airborne and Respiratory Droplet Diseases
 - Tuberculosis
 - Group A Streptococcal Disease
 - Meningococcal Disease
- Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers (e.g. Ebola, Marburg Virus Disease)



The risk of exposure to an ESW can be reduced with the use of proper health and safety programs designed to protect the worker from exposure. This resource will assist Designated Officers (DO) in assessing and managing exposures to communicable diseases.

It is important to remember that each situation and worker needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and all identified ESWs with a suspected exposure should be immediately referred to the nearest emergency department for assessment. If post exposure prophylaxis is indicated, it should begin as soon as possible.

The DO should be familiar with the following topics:

- *knowledge* about the diseases, how they are spread, and how to prevent them
- *vaccine and immunizing agents* that can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases
- *precautions and barriers* necessary for the worker to use in order to reduce the risk of exposure

[Back to Designated Officer home page](#)