

M10-EN.8 CENTRAL SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

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M10-EN.8.1 Blood borne Pathogens

Employees can be exposed to blood borne pathogens and OPIM as bloody, contaminated surgical instruments and sharps (i.e. needles, scalpels) are sorted. Employees must discard any disposable sharps and recycle reusable instruments or equipment needing to be washed and sterilized before their next use. (Link: M10-EN.3.1)

M10-EN.8.2 Hazardous Chemicals

Employees can be exposed to hazardous chemicals used in the initial washing process of dirty instruments or equipment. Other potential hazards can occur when chemicals are unlabelled and employees are not trained, as well and when employees do not use the appropriate PPE while handling hazardous chemicals found in soaps, disinfectants, cleaners, etc.

Safety Precautions

Employers can provide their employees with:

- Appropriate PPE (e.g. gloves, goggles, splash aprons) while handling hazardous dishwashing detergents and chemicals; and ensure they use them
- Proper training and information on hazardous chemicals
- Proper warning labels
- Suitable first aid facilities for quick drenching or flushing the eyes and body within the workplace for immediate emergency use
- Automatic dishwashers in order to minimise exposure to cleaning chemicals. Still, they must be cautious and use proper PPE (e.g. goggles, and/or gloves) when changing out the containers of detergent

M10-EN.8.3 Exposure to Ethylene Oxide Gas (EtO)

Ethylene Oxide is used within central supply as a sterilant for items that can not be exposed to steam sterilization. Exposure occurs from improper aeration of the ethylene oxide room after the sterilizing process or during off-gassing of sterilized items or poor gas-line connections. (Link: M10-EN.4.2)

M10-EN.8.4 Mercury Exposure

Exposure of employees to mercury occurs mainly from accidental spills during sterilization and centrifugation of thermometers in central supply areas. Exposure happens either through inhalation or skin contact. If spills are not promptly cleaned up, mercury may accumulate on surfaces, vaporize and then be inhaled by unaware employees.

Safety Precautions

Employers must be aware and:

- Replace glass thermometers and sphygmomanometers for preventing the spills
- Properly train employees to be aware of the procedures followed when a spill occurs (clean up, etc), and they must follow these policies correctly, (e.g. isolation of the contaminated area, etc)
- Have spill kits available, for the clean up of small spills

M10-EN.8.5 Glutaraldehyde

Employees can also be exposed to glutaraldehyde, another substance of products used for the cold sterilisation of instruments or other items in central supply. (Link: M10-EN.4.2)

M10-EN.8.6 Latex Allergy

Employees are exposed to latex allergy when wearing gloves while handling and sorting contaminated, bloody equipment, or while handling sterile equipment. (Link: M10-EN.3.5)

M10-EN.8.7 Burns and Cuts

Employees can be exposed to burns or cuts while handling or sorting hot sterilized items or sharp instruments, and when removing them from autoclaves/sterilizers or from steam lines that service the autoclaves (hands are especially exposed to these hazards).

Good work practices can be established for the prevention of hazards, such as:

- Leave items in the sterilizers until they are cooled
- Avoid handling sharp ends of instruments
- Use forceps or other devices for removing sharp instruments from baskets and autoclaves

Employers are required to assess the tasks and identify any potential workplace hazards and provide employees with proper PPE and ensure they use it, especially hand protection.

M10-EN.8.8 Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the science of adjusting the work to the employee. When an inequality exists between the physical requirements of work and the physical capacity of worker, work-related MSD can occur. Exposure to MSD can be done through repetitive,

prolonged, reaching, while sorting sterilized packages or lifting above shoulder height to reach high shelves of equipment or when pushing/pulling heavy carts full of dirty or clean items. Static postures may occur from continuously standing in one position while sorting instruments. Contact trauma to forearm area can happen if the employee rests wrists on hard sharp counter surfaces during sorting.

Safety precautions

- Redesign workstations so that packaging and equipment can be reached and keep elbows close to the body
- Pad the edge of work surfaces which come into contact with the elbow or forearm
- Keep any prolonged overhead activity (e.g. lower stacking shelves to shoulder height), to minimum
- Rotate repetitive tasks

Employers must provide:

- carts with large, low rolling, low resistance wheels that can easily roll over mixed flooring and gaps between elevators and passageways
- height adjustable workstations or tables minimising head tilt
- anti-fatigue mats and shoes with well-cushioned insoles and soles where floor mats cannot be used
- sit/stand stools at work stations and foot rest bar

M10-EN.8.9 Slips/Trips/Falls

Slippery floors due to steam and washing processes are potential hazards for the employees of those work areas. (Link: M10-EN.3.7)