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Polk County Government Safety Program

Polk County Employee Safety Plan

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Polk County Employee Safety Plan

Polk County Government's Commitment to Safety

The Polk County Board of Commissioners commitment to safety will strive to create a workplace in which employees can reasonably expect to have a career free of workplace injury and illness due to unsafe work conditions. Safety is a core value of our everyday culture, and we are committed to continually enhancing safety policies by instructing everyone from executive management to the most recently hired trainee to understand the importance of maximizing workplace safety. By following safe work practices, such as those outlined in our Safety Plan, or those outline specifically by departments based on unique job descriptions, the risks of workplace injury and illness are minimized or often eliminated.

"Our commitment to safety is based on caring, and it comes by no accident"

The goals for our Safety Program are to:

- Develop, implement, and maintain a safe workplace for our employees consistent with all applicable state and federal regulations.
- Control the costs related to workers' compensation insurance coverage.
- Consistently improve the safety program to minimize incidents, therefore ensuring our employees' long-term safety and wellness.
- Have zero incidents and celebrate a great safety record.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employer Responsibilities

It is the employer's responsibility to provide employees with a workplace free of recognized hazards that may cause illness or serious physical harm. Polk County must lead by using a variety of techniques to demonstrate the county's commitment to workplace safety and health.

Department Heads, Managers, and Supervisors may demonstrate their commitment in a variety of ways, such as:

- Provide and attend safety meetings.
- Setting an example by following safety rules and regulations.
- Allowing employees free access to tools and equipment necessary to do a job safely.
- Providing employees with training on specific safety issues and equipment.
- Attending employee training programs if appropriate to reinforce employee training.
- Making presentations on safety and health topics.
- Regularly emphasizing to the employees, the county's concern with safety and health.
- Conducting regular inspections followed by documentation.
- Following up after safety incidents with thorough accident investigations, correcting problems and post-accident employee training, followed by documentation.
- Recognizing and rewarding employees with the best safety and health suggestions and practices.
- Department Heads shall add appropriate safety guidance specific to their departments and provide a copy to the Safety Coordinator if applicable.

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Employee Responsibilities

As much as it is Polk County Governments responsibility to provide a safe work environment for all employees, each employee plays a critical role in the success of the safety program. We ask employees to accept this important responsibility and commit to work in the safest manner possible to ensure their own individual health and wellness for the future. We encourage all employees to communicate freely about safety concerns and offer suggestions to improve safety conditions without the fear of reprisal.

All employees are responsible to comply with all Polk County Governments safety and health rules, including the following:

- Handling equipment and work processes in accordance with established procedures and documented protocols.
- Reporting any unsafe conditions, deficiencies in equipment, or injuries (no matter how minor) to their immediate supervisor, or in their absence other management immediately.
- Complying with all instructions for safe conduct.
- Attending accident prevention and safety training and instruction, including practice drills.
- Wearing necessary safety and protective equipment at all times in specified work locations.
- Asking for clarification or assistance if unsure about the safety of a particular task and stopping the work immediately until there is clear guidance to proceed.
- Never participating in horseplay, scuffling, and other acts that endanger the safety or well-being of the work team.
- Not reporting to work under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs or being impaired by fatigue, illness, or other causes that may expose the employee or others to injury or unsafe working conditions.

Incident/Accident Investigation

It is Polk County Government's policy to investigate all workplace injuries and or illnesses in order to understand why the incident occurred and how it can be prevented from recurring. It will also serve to continuously improve our processes, procedures and policies to create a safer workplace for all employees.

The procedure for investigating employee incidents is outlined below:

In an emergency situation, **always** dial 911 immediately.

The immediate supervisor or manager should document any injury or illness immediately (or when safe to do so). All injuries and illnesses should be reported, no matter how large or small.

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Hazard Identification and Assessment

Part of our ongoing commitment to the Safety Program includes hazard identification and assessment. It is our responsibility to assess any potential hazards our employees may encounter through the normal course of their workdays. At the direction of the department head, managers and or supervisors shall collect, organize, and review information with employees to determine what types of hazards may be present and which employees may be exposed or potentially exposed. Information available in the workplace may include:

- Equipment and machinery operating manuals.
- Safety data sheets (SDS) provided by chemical manufacturers.
- Records of previous injuries and illnesses,
- Workers' compensation records and reports.
- Patterns/trends of frequently occurring injuries and illnesses.
- Input from workers, including surveys or minutes from safety and health committee meetings. Documenting that input and including copies of your safety suggestion and hazard correction forms is a best practice.

Hazard Prevention and Control

Regular inspections, along with employee feedback, allow us to keep hazard information current. With hazards continuously identified, they can be controlled or prevented.

Safe Work Practices

Implementation of special workplace rules may be necessary to continue to protect employees from hazards. Such special rules include specific procedures regarding the use of potentially hazardous equipment or materials, identification of safe acts or behaviors, requirements for personal protective devices, and good housekeeping practices. The supervisor shall make sure that these special safety and health rules are written, posted, and discussed with affected employees.

Training

Employees shall be taught to identify and avoid hazards as well as ongoing safety training based on their position and any potential hazards they may encounter during the course of their job. Managers and supervisors will highlight safe work procedures by recognizing employees.

Personal Protective Equipment

Engineering controls and safe work practices may not completely eliminate hazards. Personal protective equipment such as face shields, steel-toed boots, safety glasses, hardhats etc. may be required. Employees will be trained in the need for and proper use of such equipment and the limitations of this equipment will be made clear to all employees.

Administrative Controls

Administrative controls such as lengthened rest breaks, additional relief workers, or rotation of workers through different jobs to reduce exposure to hazards may also be employed to help with the continuing control of hazards. Administrative controls should be used in conjunction with other controls that work to eliminate hazards and control exposure more directly.

Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance is designed to eliminate possible equipment problems and plays a major role in ensuring that hazard controls continue to function effectively and that equipment malfunctions do not cause additional hazards. Our preventive maintenance is continuous and shall be performed in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Records of all maintenance performed will be maintained by the respective departments and kept on file, either by a computerized system or filing a written copy.

Recordkeeping

Polk County Government is responsible for maintaining records of all applicable safety-related programs. The records will be kept on file by the Polk County Safety Coordinator.

Lifting and Material Handling

Lifting heavy items is one of the leading causes of injury in the workplace. Bending, followed by twisting and turning, were the more commonly cited movements that caused back injuries. Strains and sprains from lifting loads improperly or from carrying loads that are either too large or too heavy are common hazards associated with manually moving materials.

When employees use smart lifting practices, they are less likely to suffer from back sprains, muscle pulls, wrist injuries, elbow injuries, spinal injuries, and other injuries caused by lifting heavy objects.

Preparation

Before lifting or carrying, plan out your lift. Think about:

- How heavy/awkward is the load? Should I use mechanical means (e.g. a hand truck) or another person to help me with this lift? Is it possible to break the load into smaller parts?
- Where am I going with the load? Is the path clear of obstructions, slippery areas, overhangs, stairs, and other uneven surfaces? Are there closed doors that need to be opened?
- Are there adequate handholds on the load? Do I need gloves or other personal protective equipment? Can I place the load in a container with better handholds? Should another person help me with the load?

Lifting

Get as close to the load as possible. Try to keep your elbows and arms close to your body. Keep your back straight during the lift by tightening the stomach muscles, bending at the knees, keeping the load close and centered in front of you, and looking up and ahead. Get a good handhold and do not twist while lifting. Do not jerk; use a smooth motion while lifting. If the load is too heavy to allow this, find someone to help you with the lift.

Carrying

Do not twist or turn the body; instead, move your feet to turn. Your hips, shoulders, toes, and knees should stay facing the same direction. Keep the load as close to your body as possible with your elbows close to your sides. If you feel fatigued, set the load down and rest for a few minutes. Don't let yourself get so fatigued that you cannot perform proper setting down and lifting technique for your rest.

Setting Down

Set the load down in the same way you picked it up, but in the reverse order. Bend at the knees, not the hips. Keep your head up, your stomach muscles tight, and do not twist your body. Keep the load as close to the body as possible. Wait until the load is secure to release your handhold.

Important Things to Remember

- Use mechanical means (e.g. hand trucks, pushcarts, etc.) when possible for heavier or awkward loads. Remember to obtain training and authorization before using a forklift.
- It is easier and safer to push than to pull.

- Keep loads as close to the body as possible and do not twist while lifting, carrying, or setting down a load. Nose, shoulders, hips, and toes should all be facing the same direction.
- Minimize reaching.
- As a general rule, bend at the knees, not the hips.
- Get help when needed. Do not lift or carry things you don't feel comfortable with, no matter how light the load.
- Plan ahead for all parts of the lift: lifting, carrying, and setting down.
- Try to utilize proper handholds while lifting. If an item does not have a good handhold, think of ways to remedy this, such as placing the item in a container with good handholds, creating a safe and proper handhold with an appropriate tool, etc.
- Use personal protective equipment where needed, such as gloves with good grip and steel-toed boots where appropriate.
- Implement rest breaks and job rotation for frequent and/or heavy lifting.
- Place items to be lifted within the "power zone". The power zone is close to the body, between the mid-thigh and mid-chest of the person doing the lifting. This is the area where the arms and back can lift the most with the least amount of effort.

Environmental Factors

Be aware of extreme temperatures that can affect lifting and material handling. For example, muscle flexibility decreases in cold temperatures, and hot temperatures can lead to heat stress. Low visibility or poor lighting increases the chance of trips and falls.

Do what you can to adjust work schedules to minimize exposure to extreme temperatures or low visibility. Wear appropriate clothing for the temperature in which you will be working. Drink lots of water to avoid dehydration in excessive heat. Provide proper lighting for areas with low light and try to perform work during daylight hours when possible.

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control

Objective

The objective of this Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan is to eliminate or minimize employee occupational exposure to blood, certain other body fluids, or other potentially infectious materials as defined below:

- Blood means human blood, human blood components, and products made from human blood.
- Bodily fluids mean any bodily fluids that is visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids.
- Other potentially infectious materials mean any unfixed tissue or organ (other than intact skin) from a human (living or dead).

Background

Polk County shall identify situations and job classifications in which employees may be exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials, and to provide protection to these employees in the form of engineering controls, personal protective equipment, training, and risk reduction.

Assignment of Responsibility

Polk County Safety Coordinator

The Polk County Safety Coordinator shall manage the Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan, and maintain all records pertaining to the plan.

Department Head

Polk County will provide adequate controls and equipment that, when used properly, will minimize or eliminate risk of occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials. Department Heads will ensure proper adherence to this plan through periodic audits.

Supervisors

Supervisors shall themselves follow and ensure that their employees are trained in and use proper work practices, universal precautions, the use of personal protective equipment, and proper cleanup and disposal techniques. Documentation of training shall be maintained by the department.

Employees

Employees are responsible for employing proper work practices, universal precautions, personal protective equipment and cleanup/disposal techniques as described in this plan. Employees are also responsible for reporting all exposure incidents to their supervisor immediately or other management in their absence.

Compliance Methods

Universal precautions

Universal precautions shall be used to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. All blood or other potentially infectious materials shall be considered infectious, regardless of the perceived status of the source individual.

Work Area Restrictions

In work areas where there is a reasonable risk of exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials, employees shall not eat, drink, apply cosmetics or lip balm, smoke, or handle contact lenses. Food and beverages shall not be kept in refrigerators, freezers, shelves, cabinets, or on counter tops or bench tops where blood or other potentially infectious materials may be present.

All processes and procedures shall be conducted in a matter that will minimize splashing, spraying, splattering, and generation of droplets of blood or other potentially infectious materials.

Contaminated Equipment

Employees shall ensure that equipment that has become contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious materials is examined prior to servicing or shipping. Contaminated equipment shall be decontaminated, unless decontamination is not feasible. Contaminated equipment shall be tagged and labeled as such.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE Provision

Department Heads shall ensure that the provisions regarding personal protective equipment described in this plan are met and maintained.

Personal protective equipment shall be chosen based on the anticipated exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials. Protective equipment shall be considered appropriate only if it does not permit blood or other potentially infectious materials to pass through or reach an employees' clothing, skin, eyes, mouth, or other mucous membranes under normal and proper conditions of use and for the duration of time that the equipment will be used.

PPE Use

Supervisors shall ensure that employees use appropriate PPE. In cases where an employee temporarily and briefly declines to use PPE because, in the employee's professional judgement, its use may prevent delivery of healthcare or pose an increased hazard to the safety of the worker or co-worker, then the supervisor shall investigate and document the situation to determine whether changes can be instituted to prevent such occurrences in the future.

PPE Accessibility

Supervisors shall ensure that appropriate PPE in the necessary sizes is readily accessible at the work site or is issued at no cost to employees. Hypoallergenic gloves, glove liners, powderless gloves, or other similar alternatives shall be readily accessible to those employees who are allergic to the gloves normally provided.

PPE Cleaning, Laundering and Disposal

All PPE shall be cleaned, laundered, and disposed of at no cost to the employees. Polk County will also make all necessary repairs and replacements at no cost to employees.

All garments penetrated by blood or other potentially infectious materials shall be removed immediately or as soon as feasible. All PPE shall be removed before leaving the work area.

When PPE is removed, it shall be placed in appropriately designated areas or containers for storage, washing, decontamination, or disposal.

Types of PPE

Gloves

- Disposable gloves are not to be washed or decontaminated for re-sue, and are to be replaced as soon as possible when they become contaminated. Gloves that become torn or punctured (or their ability to function as a barrier is otherwise compromised) shall be replaced immediately or as soon as feasible.
- Utility gloves may be decontaminated for re-use if the integrity of the glove is uncompromised. Utility gloves shall be disposed of properly if they are cracked, peeling, torn, punctured, or they exhibit other signs of deterioration or inability to function as a barrier without compromise.

Eye and Face Protection

- Masks worn in combination with eye protection devices (such as goggles or glasses with solid side shield, or chin-length face shields) are required when the occurrence of splashes, splatters, or droplets of blood or other potentially infectious materials can reasonably be anticipated to contaminate an employee's eye, nose, or mouth.

Other PPE

- Additional protective clothing (such as lab coats, gowns, aprons, clinic jackets, or similar outer garments) shall be worn in instances when gross contamination can reasonably be expected. The following situations require additional protective clothing.

Regulated Waste Disposal

- Disposal of all regulated waste shall be in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Training

- Department Heads shall ensure that training is provided at the time of initial assignment to tasks where occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials may occur. Training shall be repeated every 12 months, or when there are any changes to tasks or procedures affecting an employee's occupational exposure. Training shall be tailored to the education level and language of the affected employees, and offered during the normal work shift. Training shall be interactive and shall documented in writing or electronic.

The topics shall include the following;

- an explanation of the modes of transmission of bloodborne pathogens;
- an explanation of the Polk County Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan, and how employees can obtain a copy of the plan;
- a description and recognition of tasks that may involve exposure;
- an explanation of the use and limitations of the methods employed to reduce exposure (such as engineering controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment);
- information about the types, use, location, removal, handling, decontamination, and disposal of personal protective equipment;
- an explanation of the basis of selection of personal protective equipment;
- instruction on the appropriate actions to take and persons to contact in an emergency involving blood or other potentially infectious materials;
- an explanation of the procedures to follow if an exposure incident occurs, including the method of reporting and medical follow up;

- information on the post-incident evaluation and follow up required for all exposure incidents.

The person conducting the training shall be knowledgeable in the subject matter.

Recordkeeping

Training Records

Department Heads shall maintain all safety training records. Records shall be kept in designated place, and shall include:

- the dates of the training sessions;
- an outline describing the material presented;
- the names and qualifications of persons conducting the training; and
- the names and job titles of all persons attending the training sessions.

Evaluation and Review

Department Heads shall review this Bloodborne Exposure Control Plan for effectiveness at least annually and as needed to incorporate changes to the standard or changes in the work place.