Occupational Health

Promoting the Individual Health
and Safety of UW–Madison Employees

The Occupational Health Program

The Office of Occupational Health is the administrative office that works with the Occupational Health Committee to assure that the UW-Madison provides the necessary services and programs to protect the health and safety of its employees in the workplace.

The Occupational Health Program emphasizes services for:

- Animal care workers and researchers, and
- Workers potentially exposed to human bloodborne pathogens in the workplace.

The office includes an Occupational Health specialist and a consulting Occupational Health physician.

Why is this program necessary?

In this era of environmental awareness, the threat of environmental hazards to the health of workers has increased the interest of regulatory groups in occupational health programs.

As a result of the widespread use of animals for research and teaching purposes, a large potential exists for transmission of infections from animals to humans.

The Office for Protection Against Research Risks (OPRR) of the Public Health Service (PHS) requires all institutions receiving PHS (i.e., NIH and FDA) funding to have an occupational health program for individuals handling animals. Accreditation of college animal care facilities and programs by Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC) is also dependent upon having an occupational health program for individuals handling animals.

In December 1991, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) promulgated its Bloodborne Pathogens Rule to protect employees from contracting disease through occupational exposures to human blood and other potentially infectious materials (i.e., other body fluids associated with bloodborne disease). Effective July 1, 1993, the Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (DILHR) adopted the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Rule verbatim from federal law making all Wisconsin agencies (including the UW System) subject to it.

Ergonomics Program

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) are an increasing problem for employers during the last two decades. OSHA recently released a draft of the proposed ergonomics standard; its purpose is to reduce the large number and severity of WMSDs.

The basic elements of an ergonomics program as outlined by OSHA are:

- Management leadership and employee participation
- Hazard identification and information
- Job hazard analysis and control
- Training
- Medical management
- Program evaluation

The UW-Madison Occupational Health Program is implementing an ergonomics program that incorporates OSHA's proposed standards. A participatory approach will be emphasized with a joint effort from all parties involved.

What can the Occupational Health Office do for me as a researcher using animals?

As part of your approval to work with animals, you are required to complete an Animal Handler's Health Questionnaire. The Research Animal Resource Center (RARC) will send you this questionnaire when you apply to use animals.

The survey asks questions about animal exposures, personal vaccination status, and medical conditions that may increase risk for potential health problems. The completed confidential survey is reviewed by the Occupational Health specialist.
Upon receiving your completed questionnaire, an informational packet will be sent to you based on your responses.
UW-Madison will provide a free tetanus vaccination to animal care workers and researchers, if needed. Call the Occupational Health Office for more information.

The Occupational Health Program also works with the Research Animal Resource Center (RARC) to supervise follow-up to animal injury or potential disease exposure.

**How can the Occupational Health Office help me comply with the Bloodborne Pathogen Rule?**

To help you comply with the Bloodborne Pathogen Rule, the Occupational Health Committee produced the *UW-Madison Bloodborne Pathogen Reference and Training Manual*.

This manual and the staff in the Occupational Health Office will help you:

- Write a required Exposure Control Plan (provided in a *fill in the blanks* format in the manual) that identifies employees with occupational exposure;
- Implement methods to comply with worker protection regulations, including Universal Precautions, safe sharps handling, and disposal of regulated waste;
- Train employees on occupational risks and methods to reduce risks; and
- Identify all employees with anticipated exposure to bloodborne pathogens so that the University may offer hepatitis B vaccinations to these employees at no cost to the individual employee.

**Telephone Numbers**

| Occupational Health Specialist | 263-2177 |
| Poisn Control Center | 262-3702 |
| Safety Department | 262-8769 |
| UW Hospital Emergency Room | 262-2398 |
| UW Hospital Employee Health (for Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure only) | 263-7535 |
| UW Police and Security | 911 |

**Websites**

Bloodborne Pathogens Rule required training is available at [http://www.fpm.wisc.edu/bbp/](http://www.fpm.wisc.edu/bbp/)

Animal handler information and health questionnaire forms are available at [http://www.fpm.wisc.edu/safety/](http://www.fpm.wisc.edu/safety/) under the Occupational Health Program on the UW-Madison Safety Department home page.

**Safety Office**

Safety Department  
30 North Murray Street  
Madison WI 53715-2609

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[Research and Sponsored Programs Homepage](#)