
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

SUBJECT: EXPOSURE TO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

NO. 59.1

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Patient Population

Neonate	√
Pediatric	√
Adolescent	√
Adult	√
Geriatric	√

POLICY:

The Emergency Department will provide appropriate and expedient care to patients exposed to hazardous substances while ensuring the safety and welfare of other patients, visitors and hospital center staff.

DEFINITION:

Hazardous substances are defined as explosives, gases, flammable liquids or solids, chemicals, radioactive or otherwise dangerous substances.

PROCEDURE:

Upon Emergency Department notification by the FDNY-EMS of a patient with exposure to a hazardous substance, the Attending on duty and the Clinical Nurse Manager, or her designee, will be contacted. The FDNY-EMS representative calling the hospital will be asked if decontamination procedures have been carried out at the scene and what the decontamination entailed.

If decontamination has not occurred, the following will be done:

1. The following will be brought from the disaster cart:
 - a. Booties, gowns, head covering, face mask with face shield and gloves for each staff member caring for the patient(s).
 - b. Plastic drop cloths
 - c. Large plastic bags
 - d. Sharps disposal container (from the emergency room treatment area)

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2. The decontamination table (shower table) will be set up.
3. Engineering will be notified to close air vents in the designated treatment area.
4. If the hazardous substance is known to be radioactive, the Radiation Safety Officer and the manager of radiology will be paged. They will be responsible for bringing the Geiger counter.
5. A doctor and nurse will be assigned to assess the patient in the ambulance entrance. They will be dressed in protective clothing including mask with face shield.
 - a. Assessment will include but not be limited to airway, breathing and circulation. Any patient who is not stable will be treated immediately in the acute area.
 - b. NYC Poison Control will be consulted by the Emergency Department Attending for additional procedures and treatment.
 - c. Vital signs will be done on the patient(s) using an isolation set up. A glass thermometer will be used for temperature. This equipment will be used on the patient only prior to decontamination.
 - d. Decontamination of the patient will be done using soap and water.
 - e. All clothing of the patient (e.g. shoes, hat, undergarments) will be placed in plastic bags and kept in the area.
 - f. After decontamination is complete, the patient will be transported to the acute area for definitive treatment of the exposure as outlined by Poison Control to the Emergency Department Attending.
 - g. All Protective clothing worn by the Emergency Department staff, supplies utilized and the plastic drop cloths will be placed in plastic bags.
 - h. All clothing and supplies utilized in decontamination will be placed in a second plastic bag and removed in accordance with the hospital policy on disposal for hazardous waste.

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- i. All sharps used in the care of the patient should be disposed of in a sharps container which will be sealed after use and marked "Radioactive."
- j. The Emergency Department decontamination table will itself be decontaminated according to the recommendation of NYC Poison Control.
- k. NYC Poison Control acting as an agent of the NYC Department of Health will notify appropriate agencies.