

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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Healthcare is a field, which contains multiple hazards including bloodborne pathogens, hazardous chemicals, and lack of or improper personal protective equipment (PPE). Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to partake in the OSHA 10-hour course, with which I learned several safety precautions related to the hazards previously mentioned. This information will not only help me get a job in my field of choice, but it will also allow me to keep myself and my patients safe.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are about 385,000 sharps injuries annually in hospital employees. These sharps-related injuries may expose workers to bloodborne pathogens, which are defined as infectious microorganisms in human blood, or bodily fluids that can cause disease. These diseases include, but are not limited to hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Since taking the OSHA 10-hour course, I understand my rights as an employee in healthcare, and how to protect myself from needle-sticks and others sharps-related injuries. I have the right to receive proper personal protective equipment (PPE) at no cost, receive the hepatitis B vaccine, as well as a vaccination series, and receive worker training in appropriate engineering controls. Engineering controls are measures that will reduce employee exposure to certain hazards either by removing, eliminating, or isolating said hazards. These measures include sharps disposal containers, self-sheathing needles, and safer medical devices such as sharps injuries protections and needleless systems. I understand that is not only my responsibility to keep me safe, but also my employer's. My employer must select safer needle devices in order to help reduce employee exposure to bloodborne pathogens. If I were to be struck by a needle, I have the right to a post exposure evaluation and follow-up. My new understanding of OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard will help me identify hazards such as unsafe needle devices and improper PPE, and this new understanding will help me better comprehend my rights as an employee.

Throughout the OSHA 10-hour course, I was given the tools to start safe and safe. I am able to locate hazardous chemicals, and recognize my rights as an employee regarding hazardous chemicals. As a future healthcare worker, I will be at risk of exposure to hazardous chemicals such as pesticides, disinfectants, and hazardous drugs. Therefore, it is necessary that I understand that as an employee I have to right to access Safety Data Sheets (SDSs). I have the right to be provided adequate training, and I have the right to demand visible warning labels, and file a complaint if there are none. Safety Data Sheets will help me better identify hazards that I may be exposed to in the workplace, as they include more detailed information on the hazards such as identifications, hazards, prevention, and exposure controls. SDSs prove to be an important resource for employees to learn more about the products they will be using. It will also help me, as an employee, to identify the specific hazards of the chemical, and how to protect myself and other employees from those hazards, including safe handling and emergency measures.

Without proper personal protective equipment, I could be at risk for exposure to several infectious material or chemicals. Throughout the OSHA-10 hour course, I have learned about the PPE standards. If needed, I must be provided proper personal protective equipment by my employer. In addition, employers must conduct a hazards assessment to determine which hazards are present that require appropriate PPE. Personal protective equipment is a necessity in the health field, as illnesses could easily travel from patient to caretaker if one does not have proper PPE. For example, if a patient has Anthrax, an airborne illness, and the nurse or doctor taking care of the patient does not have a surgical facemask, then there is a very high chance that said nurse or doctor will contract the illness. My knowledge about the guidelines and importance of proper protective equipment will help me greatly in my future.

Choosing a career in the health field means choosing a career with several work hazards, luckily; however, I have recently received my 10-hour OSHA credential, and am therefore qualified to locate and dispose of hazards. This knowledge will help me in my future career to protect myself and my patients. I can use my understanding of employee rights under OSHA to protect myself from any further damage caused by negligence of my employers. I am able to report this negligence and get the issue solved in a matter of time. I look forward to successfully becoming part of the health field, while starting safe and staying safe.