Retail Tagger Safety Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. Because of rapid turnover in the retail industry, many new employers, supervisors, and employees are unaware of the possible serious hazards from bloodborne pathogens associated with sharing tagging guns when instruments are not disinfected.
2. Workers using tagging guns in the garment and other associated industries may be covered by health and safety standards that protect workers from the hazards associated with bloodborne pathogens, depending on the individual circumstances of the work.
3. Use of tagging guns can result in a worker sustaining a needlestick with a contaminated needle. This happens when one worker accidentally punctures his or her skin with the needle of a tagging gun and another worker using the same gun, with the same needle, sustains the same type of injury.
4. The risk of exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials can be reasonably anticipated.
5. To prevent needlestick contamination assign employees from using any tagging gun other than the one assigned to them.

STATS

- In one year there had been only nine recorded accidents involving tagging guns at distribution centers which employed 317 (mainly part-time) staff. However, it was recognized that considerable under-reporting existed,13 as many workers do not consider that minor skin punctures are worthy of an entry in the accident book. Anecdotal reports suggested that prick rates of three per 4-hour shifts were not unusual when tagging was in progress.
- It was assumed that if the source individual had an ATDS-related disease he/she would not be engaged in this kind of physical work, but the overall risk of transmission was assessed at not less than 1 in 300. Thus, the overall risk of transmission of HIV from a piercing wound using this tagging device would be around 1 in 150,000.
- The transmission of HTV by a single percutaneous transmission from a known HTV-positive source is, overall, 1 in 300,6, and the risk is increased considerably if the injury is deep, or blood is visible on the device.
- For hepatitis B, the risk from a carrier is likely to be higher than for HTV, and the virus, which is known to be more stable, may persist on the

needle in an infectious state for longer. In the workforce of 1% and that 5% of these are ‘high infectivity’ (HB positive) carriers, the risk of transmission may be as high as 1 in 6,000. The prevalence of hepatitis C in blood donors in the Western world ranges from 0.3 to 1.5%10 although higher rates (1.3-1.5%).