

Work Environment Group

Number 1
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HAZARD ALERT

Hand Injury: Puncture Wound

Incident

A recent injury occurred when a technical service support worker entered a biological laboratory and borrowed someone's personal laboratory coat, after discovering there being no shared lab coats available. The coat had un-protected tweezers inside the pocket. As a result the technician sustained a deep puncture wound when they put their hand into the pocket.

Implements of this type can often be associated with laboratory procedures involving medical, biological, radioactive, and other hazardous chemical procedures. Thankfully in this particular event the tweezers were proven not to be contaminated or infectious, as their association was known to be within a non-hazardous operational PC2 Biological Sciences laboratory.

This incident is a timely reminder for wearers of laboratory coats not to leave implements of this nature in the pockets, this includes needles, scalpel, scissors, glass pipettes etc.

It is also an opportunity to inform visitors to laboratories not to wear another laboratory workers lab coat.

Recommendations

- Laboratory workers are advised not to carry or store sharp implements inside lab coat pockets. These implements can and do find their way into the soiled linen processing facilities, putting other workers at risk.
- When donning a lab coat carefully pat down the pockets checking for unidentified objects, before putting your hands into the pockets.
- Laboratory facilities shall ensure there are separate lab coats, including disposable style coats available, well separated from the regular occupant's coats, for and identified for visitors.
- Workshops must ensure their areas have a well-stocked supply of disposable overcoats so as not to be dependent on the supply of shared laboratory coats. Technical areas like electronics, IT and mechanical workshops are regularly required to enter laboratories as part of undertaking their services.

Take down: MAY 2017

Authorised by: Work Environment Group

Contact: whs@anu.edu.au for additional information

Staff and Students are reminded to report incidents to their supervisor and/or through the HORUS/ISIS online incident notification systems.