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Ebola; are you prepared?

The world is currently flooded with stories about Ebola. While much of this focus is on the healthcare industry there has been very little published about other situations which can give rise to a potential exposure to this illness. The funeral industry is directly behind the healthcare providers in terms of potential risk. Although at this time there has not been a case reported in the United States of a death that has



been determined to be Ebola related after the fact, the statistical probability does exist

that it can happen. Therefore, it only is logical to **ensure that established universal precaution procedures are being followed to minimize the risk of exposure by those who are handling deceased bodies which may be car-**

riers whether or not Ebola was identified as a possible risk. First, it is important to focus on facts and not exaggerated news stories. It is not easy to contract Ebola according to the CDC. Here are some facts to be aware of regarding Ebola:

- Contracting the disease can only occur person-to-person through direct contact with virus infected body fluids from a person who has active symptoms of the illness. It is not airborne!
- Symptoms may occur anytime between 2 to 21 days after exposure though the average is 8 to 10 days.
- A fever greater than 101.5 degrees F. is a key symptom.
- Other symptoms include severe headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, bleeding or bruising.

Funeral homes should already



have existing Bloodborne Pathogen policies in place as required by 29 CFR

1910.1030(d)(1). However, here is a quick review of standard precautions which should be followed:

- Assume every body is a potential risk and all body fluids should be considered as potentially infectious.
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, and gowns) if there will be exposure to infectious material. In other words when dealing with every body.
- Follow all OSHA required standards when dealing with human remains.

Contact us with any questions you may have on appropriate procedures.

The Foresight Companies, LLC.

Foresight has been and continues to be at the forefront of Human Resources consulting for funeral homes and cemeteries throughout the United States. We help our clients deal with the complete cycle of HR matters from hiring to firing, compensation, training, employee manuals and procedure manuals and giving reviews. Call us for a free assessment of what you are doing and how we can enhance your HR policies.

