



## INFORMATION BULLETIN

TO: All Uniformed Personnel  
FROM: Brandon Wade, Division Chief  
DATE: November 6, 2017  
SUBJECT: Sharps Injury Prevention and Proper Personal Protective Equipment Use

On a recent incident, Austin/Travis County EMS (ATCEMS) medics requested Austin Fire Department (AFD) personnel to obtain a blood glucose assessment of a patient. A Firefighter attempted to access the blood from the needle portion of the IV catheter that ATCEMS administered. In this process, the Firefighter came into contact with the needle, resulting in an exposure to the Firefighter. Members of AFD shall only collect a blood glucose assessment through a finger or heel stick as advised in the Clinical Operating Guidelines (COG's).

Requests for assistance from ATCEMS personnel concerning the use, handling and/or manipulation of any item – such as needles or other sharps – that poses a hazard must be declined if it requires operating outside of the COGs or is not compliant with best practices in regards to safety. Being unfamiliar with medical equipment and ATCEMS procedures can lead to safety issues. For example, if assistance is requested with disposing of a sharp, the most appropriate course of action to take would be to place a sharps container within reach.

Proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safe handling of sharps is mandatory and shall be utilized on all medical incidents. The following guidelines by the CDC and NIOSH should be followed at all times:

<https://www.cdc.gov/sharpsafety/tools.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2000-108/pdfs/2000-108.pdf>

It is also important to remember, with flu season in full swing and some recent exposures experienced by AFD personnel, that PPE does not work if it is not utilized. In addition to bodily fluids, exposures can also occur through the air. Common cold, flu and meningitis all spread via airborne droplets and any close contact with a patient requires the use of an N95 to prevent exposure. Lastly, fever is usually caused by some type of infection so pay attention to call notes and always err on the side of caution.

Please direct questions or concerns to the Medical Operations Staff at [firemedops@austintexas.gov](mailto:firemedops@austintexas.gov).

Approved for distribution by: Assistant Chief Aaron Woolverton