



FENTANYL EXPOSURE AND SAFETY



Today, we're going to talk about something that's become a serious safety concern, not just on the streets but on job sites like ours: fentanyl exposure. This is a conversation that could save a life, so I appreciate your full attention.

WHAT IS FENTANYL?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that's 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. It's used medically for pain relief, but the problem is it's often found in illegal drugs like heroin, cocaine, and counterfeit pills. Even a tiny amount of fentanyl, as small as a few grains of salt, can be deadly.

Fentanyl is incredibly potent. Exposure can happen through: Skin contact; Inhaling powder; Accidental needle sticks. The symptoms of exposure can set in quickly and include difficulty breathing, dizziness, confusion, and unconsciousness. In severe cases, it can lead to death if not treated immediately.

You might be wondering, "What does fentanyl have to do with construction?" Here's the reality:

Sometimes, people struggling with substance use might bring drugs to the site. They might not realize they're using something laced with fentanyl. You might come across drug paraphernalia like needles, pills, or powder while cleaning up job sites or working in public areas. Fentanyl can be mixed with other drugs or even pressed into pills that look like prescription meds. If someone nearby is using drugs or overdoses, you could accidentally inhale or come into contact with fentanyl residue.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR COWORKERS

- **Be Aware of Your Surroundings** - Keep an eye out for anything suspicious, like loose pills, powders, needles, or other drug paraphernalia on the job site.
- **Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - If you're handling waste or cleaning up areas where drugs could be present, wear gloves and a mask to minimize the risk of exposure. Never handle suspicious items with your bare hands.
- **Wash Your Hands Regularly** If you think you might have come into contact with fentanyl, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Don't use hand sanitizer, as it can increase absorption through the skin.
- **Proper Disposal** -If you come across needles, pills, or powder, don't try to dispose of them yourself. Follow your company's hazardous waste protocol or call in professionals who are trained to handle it safely.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF SUSPECTED FENTANYL EXPOSURE OR OVERDOSE

- **Don't Panic** - If someone collapses or shows symptoms of opioid exposure, stay calm. Quick action can make all the difference.
- **Call for Help** - Dial 911 immediately. Tell them you suspect a fentanyl overdose so they can send appropriate help.
- **Administer Narcan if Available** - If Narcan/Naloxone is available, follow the instructions on the kit. Even if you're not sure if it's fentanyl, it's better to use it than not; it won't harm someone who isn't overdosing and it is not an OSHA recordable.
- **Avoid Contact** - Do not touch the person's skin if they have powder on them. Use gloves if possible, and avoid breathing in any powder that might be in the air.
- **Stay with the Person Until Help Arrives** - If they're unconscious, turn them on their side to prevent choking.

Fentanyl exposure is a real threat, even on construction sites. By staying alert, using proper PPE, and knowing how to use Narcan, we can keep ourselves and each other safe.

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