



# LEIA Safety Information Sheet

## Sharps

Prepared by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee

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## SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET SHARPS

### PREAMBLE

This Information Sheet is one of a series produced by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee on topics relevant to the Lift and Escalator Industry. Whilst every effort has been taken in the production of these sheets, it must be acknowledged that they should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation, codes of practice etc. They should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law but guidance to it.

### DISCARDED HYPODERMIC NEEDLES

Hypodermic syringes and needles are regularly found in lift installations, particularly in door tracks and lift pits. They may also be found in access or lifting equipment within domestic properties of individuals with medical conditions and reduced mobility. These discarded sharps present a serious risk of injury and possible infection.

### SITES AT RISK

All sites could be at risk, but particular attention should be paid in:

- Car Parks
- Flats
- Hospitals
- Public Offices
- Public Places (eg railways)
- Colleges & Universities

### AREAS OF RISK

Employees working in areas where there is a likelihood that hypodermic needles could be found must be instructed to take particular care.

Work in locations where it is considered that hypodermic needles could be present, e.g. in door tracks, door headers, lift pits, lift steelwork etc, must be undertaken carefully and should ideally be checked before work commences. Other areas where needles have been found include:

- wedged in lift car vents
- lying on top of car lighting panelling
- wedged under staircase banister handrails
- taped onto doorknobs
- forced into landing call buttons
- escalator brush boxes
- around access routes to motor rooms
- inside motor rooms
- Under trays of platform lifts

## HIGH RISK SITES

High risk sites should be identified.

It is important to warn those likely to be exposed to the risk of injury.

One method of raising awareness in a high-risk location is to display a Safety Warning sign in prominent positions in the machine room, at the top of the lift well and in the lift pit area.



*Example High Risk Site Safety Sign*

## JOB HAZARD ANALYSIS

To reduce the risk of injury “Job Hazard Analysis” must be conducted before performing any work task in the areas where needles may be found. It is advised not to kneel or place bare hands in areas where needles may have been discarded.

If it is determined that work tasks can proceed it is important that any suspect areas should have adequate lighting. This may require a hand lamp or torch to illuminate these areas. Strong safety footwear and appropriate substantial gloves must be worn. Suitable tools, e.g. screwdrivers, hand-brushes (long handled) and/or a ‘grabber’ device must be used to clear debris from door sill tracks, headers, and from lift pits rather than hands.

**The Job Hazard Analysis must be performed before any work task is undertaken. Anti-syringe gloves are advised be worn when carrying out work on high-risk sites, and should only be removed when it is certain that needles are not present in the work area.**

Should needles be found procedures should be established giving clear advice to the engineer regarding the arrangements which should be made, e.g. through the customer, for disposal.

In many situations, the local Environmental Health Department operates a system of collection from where hypodermic needles are found and will ensure their safe disposal.

The Company policy should also cover action to be taken in event of an injury from a discarded needle. In some cases hospitals and local authorities may operate a hypodermic injury procedure and companies should contact these groups to seek advice with regard to action to be taken. In most cases no immediate test is available for checking of possible infection.

## RISK OF INFECTION

Due to the risk of infection that injury from needles present, those ‘at risk’ field employees should consider consulting their doctor regarding vaccination against Hepatitis B.

Employees are reminded that Immunisation against Tetanus should also be maintained.

Should an employee receive an injury from a discarded hypodermic needle, they must seek immediate medical advice and report the accident to their Manager as soon as possible.

See the NHS website for current guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/accidents-first-aid-and-treatments/what-should-i-do-if-i-injure-myself-with-a-used-needle/>

## FIRST AID ADVICE

- encourage the wound to bleed, ideally by holding it under running water
- wash the wound using running water and plenty of soap
- do not scrub the wound while you're washing it
- do not suck the wound
- dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing

Seek urgent medical advice as you may need treatment to reduce the risk of getting an infection:

- Contact your employer's Occupational Health service if you injure yourself at work
- Otherwise call your GP, NHS 111 or go to the nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department

Sharps injuries must be reported to HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) if:

- an employee is injured by a sharp known to be contaminated with a blood-borne virus (BBV), eg hepatitis B or C or HIV. This is reportable as a dangerous occurrence.
- the employee receives a sharps injury and a BBV acquired by this route sero-converts. This is reportable as a disease.
- if the injury itself is so severe that it must be reported.

If the sharp is not contaminated with a BBV, or the source of the sharps injury cannot be traced, it is not reportable to HSE, unless the injury itself causes an over-seven-day injury. If the employee develops a disease attributable to the injury, then it must be reported.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

HSE <http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/actions.htm>

Cuts through manual handling (items such as door frames during installation, removal of old equipment etc) should be covered through your manual handling assessment procedure – refer to Information Sheet 14 'Manual Handling Operations'.