

REPORT  
FROM



THE PERSONNEL  
DEPARTMENT

TO: Public Safety Committee	DATE 8/23/2023
REFERENCE:	COUNCIL FILE CF 23-0353
SUBJECT: <b>PRACTICES TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF CITY PERSONNEL THAT MAY COME INTO CONTACT WITH NEW SUBSTANCES AS THEY ARE IDENTIFIED.</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council receive and approve this report.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City Council identified that there has been an acute increase in drug involved overdose deaths in Los Angeles County. This public health crisis was found to be related to the synthetic opioid fentanyl and other associated substances. In March 2023, City Council directed the Personnel Department (Personnel) to report on practices to ensure the safety of City personnel that may come into contact with new substances as they are identified.

**DISCUSSION:**

First responders are more likely to come into contact with a mixture of illicit drugs while conducting routine job duties. These mixtures of illicit drugs can include cocaine, methamphetamines, cannabinoids, xylazines, and opioids such as fentanyl and heroin, for example. Additionally, fentanyl laced with xylazine has the potential to cause a severe wound when injected. These open wounds may place responding City workers at a greater risk for drug exposure. As employee exposure to illicit drugs can be health and life threatening, Personnel is committed to ensuring a safe work environment for all City workers.

The Personnel Department has identified the following topics and procedures to address the potential exposure of illicit drugs to City employees:

- Recommendations
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Training
- Emergency Medical Treatment
- Resources

**A. Recommendations**

Employees should follow their Department's established work practices as well as these recommendations when illicit drugs are known or suspected to be present. The following information should be made available to all first responders and those employees that may come into contact with illicit drugs.

**When arriving at a scene, employees should:**

1. Analyze the incident.
2. Determine if illicit drugs and/or other hazards may be present.
3. Do not eat, drink, smoke, or use the bathroom while working in an area with known or suspected illicit drugs.
4. Do not touch the eyes, mouth, or nose after touching any potentially contaminated surface.
5. Always wear nitrile gloves when illicit drugs may be present.
6. Avoid performing tasks or operations that may cause illicit drugs to enter the air.
7. Avoid direct skin contact with illicit drugs. If this occurs, immediately wash the area with soap and water and notify dispatch and/or your supervisor.
8. Do not use hand sanitizer (or any alcohol based cleaner) or bleach.

9. Be aware that the use of illicit drugs in bathrooms is reportedly a common practice. Individuals might hide or try to get rid of illicit substances by dumping them into the toilet and flushing repeatedly. This process can increase the chances of responders inhaling harmful substances. This process may also cause bathroom surfaces and materials to be unsafe.

## A. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Always wear nitrile gloves when illicit drugs may be present and change them properly when they become contaminated.
2. Wear respiratory protection if powdered illicit drugs are visible or suspected.
3. Avoid performing tasks or operations that may cause illicit drugs to become airborne.
4. Understand the levels of exposure;
  - **Minimal:** Response to a situation where it is suspected that illicit drugs may be present, but no illicit drug products are visible
  - **Moderate:** Response to a situation where small amounts of illicit drugs in powder or liquid are visible
  - **High:** Response to a situation where large amounts of illicit drugs in liquid or powder form are visible
5. All PPE should be used in accordance with the Cal-OSHA PPE standard (29 CFR 1910.132). When required, respirator use should be in the context of a comprehensive respiratory protection program in accordance with the Cal-OSHA respiratory protection standard (28 CFR 1910.134) and other requirements.
6. Employees who need to wear respirators must be medically cleared, trained, and fit-tested for respirator use. Detailed information on respiratory protection programs, including fit-testing procedures, can be accessed at Cal-OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard, <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5144.html>.

## B. Training

The following topics should be covered during trainings about illicit drug exposure. Employees who perform jobs where illicit drugs including fentanyl may be present should receive special training in how to conduct an on-scene risk assessment. Employees should demonstrate an understanding of the following:

1. How to recognize the substance and determine the quantity of illicit drugs.
2. How to recognize situations that may cause illicit drugs to enter the air.
3. How to safely collect, handle, process, and store evidence that may be contaminated by illicit drugs.
4. When to use PPE; what PPE is necessary; how to put on, use, take off, dispose of, and maintain PPE; and the limitations of PPE.
5. What the potential exposure routes are for illicit drugs.
6. Have knowledge of the Department's internal procedures.
7. Comply with Cal-OSHA's hazardous materials standard (29 CFR 1910.120<sup>external icon</sup>) when conducting clean-up operations involving hazardous substances.

## C. Emergency Medical Care

An employee can help someone who has overdosed by following these steps;

- **Ensure Emergency Medical Services have been requested. (Call 911)**
- **Immediate definitive professional medical attention is needed.**

1. Assess the scene and ensure it is safe to enter.
2. Recognize the signs and symptoms of an overdose.
3. Administer naloxone. A second dose may be needed if the person is still unresponsive after 2-3 minutes.
4. Naloxone effects are temporary. Naloxone will not reverse overdoses from other drugs, such as alcohol, benzodiazepines, cocaine, cannabinoids, xylazine or amphetamines.
5. Start other first aid such as CPR, if trained to do so.

## D. Resources

### 1. Fentanyl and Overdose Prevention.

Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) can be used by individuals to detect the presence of fentanyl that may have been combined with another drug. Fentanyl Test Strips are a harm reduction strategy designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use, including the risk of fatal and nonfatal overdose. Anyone can purchase and use FTS to test for the presence of fentanyl in a drug.

### 2. Fentanyl Test Strip Prevention Overdose fact sheet

[Fentanyl Testing to Prevent Overdose- Fact Sheet](#)

### 3. Overdose Bag

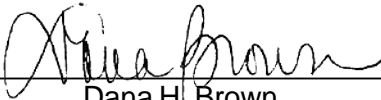
The Overdose Bag is a kit that can save a life by providing information and medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid-related overdose and prevent death. The Overdose Kit printable materials and the Overdose Kit Instructions Guide can be found online at. [Overdose Bag Kit and Instructions Guide Materials.](#)

### 4. California Department of Public Health Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch

[Substance Abuse and Prevention](#)

## CONCLUSION:

It is of the highest priority to ensure the safety of City workers that come into contact with any person or environment which may have been exposed to drugs or other substances. The Personnel Department will provide guidance on policies, procedures and general information when contacting people or environments with potential illicit drug exposure. This will be accomplished through published memos, videos placed on the intranet and direct advising of Departments.

  
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Dana H. Brown  
General Manager