

Retail Tagger Safety

Tagging guns used to attach price, brand, and information tags on clothing and other goods in the garment industry and retail establishments pose a bloodborne pathogen hazard to the workers that use them if they get stuck with the needles. Workers need to know the risks of using tagging guns and needles and take precautions to avoid bloodborne pathogen exposures.

A worker that uses a tagger gun on the job may get stuck accidentally with the needle. You are at risk of a bloodborne pathogen exposure if you use the same tagging gun and also get stuck accidentally with the same needle. If this happens, you have been exposed to the blood of the other worker and any potential bloodborne pathogens that may be in their blood such as hepatitis B and HIV.

In the garment manufacturing or processing industry or other manufacturing settings there is very frequent use of a tagging gun. In the retail industry tagger guns are used less frequently. Either way, there is a “reasonably anticipated exposure to blood” with a tagger and your employer is responsible for controlling this hazard. Your employer may adopt a tagger use policy under a bloodborne pathogen program (BBP) subject to Cal OSHA standards or the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).

There are several ways to control tagger gun needlestick exposure risks. Your employer may make it a policy to clean and disinfect the tagger needles after each use. You may also be issued a new needle for each use. Get training on bloodborne pathogens, exposures, and learn the potential health consequences of violating a clean needle policy.

To avoid a needlestick when using the tagger gun, make sure to watch what you are doing and know where your hands are at all times. Tag clothing and materials away from your body. Use a firm surface to tag against when possible. If you cannot see where you are holding the tagger and needle, reposition the work and use the tagger where you can see it and your hands.

If you are using a tagger gun and get a needlestick, immediately wash the area with soap and water. If you do not have soap and water available, use an antiseptic cleanser and/or towelettes until you can get to soap and water as soon as possible. If you are in doubt about the cleanliness of the needle, seek immediate medical attention.

Medical treatment may include a hepatitis B vaccination (there is no vaccine available for HIV) and drug therapy. To be most effective, you should receive this medical treatment within 24 hours of exposure. Immediately report a needlestick to your employer. Your employer must offer you the hepatitis B vaccination as well as follow-up medical care and counseling.

Learn about bloodborne pathogens and safe tagger gun use. Don't hang out safety when you are putting on the hang tag.