

GN X-XX Wash-Down Procedures at Emergency Scenes

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Background

Firefighters may be requested to wash down blood or bodily fluids at emergency incidents. This guidance note provides directions to fire service personnel to ensure safe practices, minimize exposure to biological hazards, and reduce psychological stress while meeting community needs.

Concerns/hazards

- **Biological hazards:** Exposure to bloodborne pathogens and infectious materials.
- **Psychological hazards:** Potential for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Physical hazards:** Slip hazards from water and bodily fluids.
- **Prohibited activities:** Handling brain matter, separated body parts, or internal organs.

Actions for employers

Employers must:

- Develop and implement written procedures for wash-down requests.
- Train Incident Commanders (ICs) to assess appropriateness based on scene conditions.
- Provide appropriate PPE (gloves, eye protection, Tyvek suits if available).
- Maintain training records and review procedures regularly.
- Establish a process for referral to private companies.
- Ensure compliance with OSHA and applicable standards.

Actions for workers

Workers must:

- Follow the direction of the Incident Commander.
- Do not handle brain matter, body parts, or internal organs.
- Conduct wash-down upwind, at least 5 metres from bodily fluids.
- Use appropriate PPE at all times (gloves, eye protection, Tyvek suits if available).
- Defer to IC judgment on whether wash-down is appropriate.

Applicable regulations and acts

Read:

- [*Occupational Health and Safety Act*](#)
 - Clause 25(2)(h): Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.
- [Regulation 833: Control of exposure to biological or chemical agents](#)