

Cal/OSHA Guidance on Safety Needles for H1N1 Vaccine

Cal/OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens standard requires that devices with engineered sharps injury protection be used for the administration of medications. Since the H1N1 vaccine is arriving in pre-filled syringes that will accept a safety needle cartridge, the employer should attempt to obtain a safety needle cartridge. The employer's attempts should not be limited to their existing arrangements with suppliers, and should include safety needle cartridges from other manufacturers.

However, there is a "market availability" exception that applies when a safety device is not available in the marketplace. If safety needle cartridges cannot be obtained in a timely manner, the employer should document the contacts they have made in accordance with their exposure control plan. *They should not let any of these efforts delay administration of the vaccine.* Employers should ensure that employees are trained on any devices they use.

The employer does not need to either cancel the clinic, or empty the prefilled syringe into another device. Anyone who has further questions should not hesitate to contact Cal/OSHA, at 1(800) 963-9424 or infocons@dir.ca.gov.

Cal/OSHA has also addressed this issue in a "Frequently Asked Questions" document available at: <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/bloodbornefaq.html>. Please see question #35.