

Biological and Animal Excrement on Telecommunications Infrastructure



**AWARENESS
GUIDELINE**

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AWARENESS GUIDELINE

Purpose

This guideline is for the safe handling, cleanup, and prevention of accidental exposure to biological excrement (bird droppings, rodent waste, and pest contaminants such as roaches and other insects) in the workplace. If remedial process is deemed necessary, then a site-specific health and safety plan may be required. This specific remedial process is not outlined in this document

Scope

This guideline applies to all employees, contractors, and visitors who may work in or around areas contaminated with animal or pest excrement.

Hazards of Exposure

- Bird droppings may contain fungi (e.g., *Histoplasma capsulatum*) and bacteria.
- Rodent waste may transmit hantavirus and other pathogens.
- Pest (roachs, other insects) contamination can spread allergens and bacteria.

Exposure can occur through:

- Inhalation of dust or dried droppings.
- Direct contact with skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.).
- Hand-to-mouth transfer (eating, drinking, or smoking without prior handwashing).
- Contact with contaminated clothing, tools, or surfaces.

In the event of accidental exposure:

- Stop work immediately and leave the contaminated area.
- Wash exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water.
- Remove and properly bag contaminated clothing.
- Report the incident to a supervisor for evaluation and possible medical follow-up.

Health Risks of Animal Excrements

General Unsanitary Conditions

Accumulations of excrement attract insects and rodents and create an unsanitary, unpleasant working environment.

Allergic Reactions and Respiratory Irritation

Dried excrements can become airborne dust, irritating the respiratory system and potentially triggering asthma or allergic responses or other reactions.

Fungal Infections

Histoplasmosis

- **Cause:** *Histoplasma capsulatum* fungus, found in animal excrements, especially when mixed with soil.
- **Transmission:** Inhalation of airborne fungal spores.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, fatigue, cough, chest pain. Severe cases can affect the lungs and other organs.

Cryptococcosis

- **Cause:** *Cryptococcus neoformans*, present in pigeon excrements.
- **Transmission:** Inhalation of contaminated dust or spores.
- **Symptoms:** Respiratory symptoms initially; can progress to meningitis if it spreads to the brain.

Bacterial Infections

Psittacosis (Parrot Fever)

- **Cause:** *Chlamydia psittaci* bacteria.
- **Transmission:** Inhalation of dried excrements, feathers, or respiratory secretions.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, chills, dry cough, headache, muscle aches, pneumonia in severe cases.

Structural Damage and Equipment Malfunction Risks

Animal waste is acidic and can corrode metal, damage paint, and degrade equipment such as cables, antennas, and electrical components—posing indirect safety risks.

Abatement Recommendations

1. Conduct a Site Assessment

- Inspect the facility for bird nesting areas and fecal accumulation.
- Identify high-risk zones and evaluate worker exposure potential.
- Excrements can accumulate and become slick, increasing the risk of slips, trips, and falls, especially on during wet conditions.

2. Implement Cleaning Process (if applicable)

- Schedule professional cleaning of animal excrements using a qualified vendor.
- Ensure methods to minimize dust and aerosolization and proper disposal (e.g., pre-wet excrements before removal).

- If performing self-cleaning:
 - Wear appropriate PPE (gloves, mask/respirator, protective clothing).
 - Lightly dampen droppings or waste before removal to reduce dust.
 - Collect and dispose of waste in sealed bags.
 - Clean and disinfect affected surfaces with approved cleaning agents.
 - Wash hands immediately after cleanup.
 - Do not eat, drink, or smoke until hands and face are thoroughly washed and contaminated clothing is removed or disposed of.

3. Install Deterrents (if applicable)

- Use physical deterrents or barriers to prevent nesting, roosting or travel.
- Use traps and bait stations to control varmints.
- Maintain and inspect deterrents regularly.

4. Ensure Environmental Compliance

- Follow federal, state, and local environmental laws regarding waste disposal and wildlife protection.
- Avoid disturbing active nests if protected bird species are involved.
<https://natehome.com/safety-education/working-on-bird-nest-sites/working-on-bird-nest-sites/>

Worker Recommendations

1. Conduct a Site-Specific Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)

- Identify potential exposure to animal excrements when performing the on-site JHA and document the hazards with mitigation step(s).

2. Train Workers on Hazards

- Educate workers on diseases (e.g., histoplasmosis, psittacosis), symptoms, transmission methods, slip/fall potential, proper personal protection, including hygiene best practices, and PPE utilization.

3. Provide PPE

- Respirators (N95 or better), disposable coveralls, gloves, and eye protection.

4. Supervisors must ensure employees are trained on this guideline.

Relevant OSHA Regulations

- **General Duty Clause (OSH Act Section 5(a)(1))**

- Requires employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious harm.
- OSHA has cited employers under this clause for not mitigating exposure to animal excrements.

- **Sanitation Standard (29 CFR 1910.141)**
 - Mandates workplaces be kept clean to the extent the nature of the work allows.
 - Includes removal of waste such as animal excrements to prevent unsanitary conditions.
- **Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200)**
 - Requires informing and training employees about hazardous biological agents they may encounter.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Standards (29 CFR 1910 Subpart I)**
 - Employers must provide appropriate PPE (gloves, respirators, protective clothing) to protect against exposure to animal excrements.
 - ANSI standards help define proper PPE specifications.



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