



mouchel

Health & Safety Alert

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(rec'd from BAM Nuttall via HTMASF and HA)

TSA006 – Danger of Infection

An incident has recently been reported where an operative working on a Cheshire Highways contract was admitted to hospital with an infection in his forehead.

Background

The IP commenced work on Monday and had a small cut on the right hand side of his forehead. The cause of this was unknown. It was slightly uncomfortable but at this stage did not raise any concern. By Tuesday slight swelling was noticed and the forehead became increasingly swollen during the day. The IP contacted his doctor for an appointment on Wednesday morning. By this time the swelling had worsened and his eyes were swollen and half closed. On arrival at the doctor's surgery the IP was immediately sent to hospital where he was admitted and kept under observation for four days. He was treated for cellulitis (see explanation below)

Cellulitis is a diffuse inflammation of connective tissue with severe inflammation of dermal and subcutaneous layers of the skin. Cellulitis can be caused by normal skin flora or by exogenous bacteria, and often occurs where the skin has previously been broken: cracks in the skin, cuts, blisters, burns, insect bites, surgical wounds, or sites of intravenous catheter insertion. Skin on the face or lower legs is most commonly affected by this infection, though cellulitis can occur on any part of the body. The mainstay of therapy remains treatment with appropriate antibiotics.

Although the reasons for this infection were unknown it was decided to examine the IP's Safety Helmet. The helmet was in reasonable condition but it was noted that his gloves were being stored in the helmet. Further investigation showed that this is common practice throughout the workforce. Not only was the helmet used to carry gloves, but light eye protection also. It is possible that there is an increased risk associated with this practice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To reduce the potential for infection

- **Ensure the inside of your safety helmet is kept in a clean condition.**
- **Do not carry or store gloves or other soiled PPE in your safety helmet.**
- **Ensure any open cuts or grazes are properly treated and covered if appropriate.**

