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Sample General Safe Work Practice Working near Sewage

Health effects of exposure to sewage and contaminated soil include:

- Tetanus – caused by a toxin produced by bacteria common in soil and sewage.
- Leptospirosis – caused by a parasitic worm.
- Hepatitis A, B or C.
- Bacteria such as *E. coli*, and parasites such as *giardia* and *cryptosporidium*.

Human pathogens from soil and raw sewage can enter the body through the nose or mouth, particularly if a person drinks contaminated water or by touching contamination and then touching your mouth or nose. Exposure can also occur through open wounds or by inhaling (human pathogens in dust, for example).

- Avoid exposure to sewage by wearing gloves, coveralls, rubber boots, eye protection, washing your hands, and decontaminating your equipment after use.
- Do not eat or drink while working in a potentially contaminated area. Wash your hands before meals.
- After working with raw sewage or soil, wash immediately with soap and water. Do not use solvents to wash your hands as the solvents can cause irritation that may lead to skin infections. Learn more about handwashing and the risk of infections.
- Change out of work clothes before leaving the work site. If any sewage has gotten onto your clothes, change them right away. Soiled work clothes should be sealed in a plastic bag and laundered separately from other clothing. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling the clothing.

Please note: This document is for information purposes only as a guide. The safe job procedures (SJP) and safe work practices (SWP) created for your workplace should reflect your organizations processes, equipment and hazards as identified by a hazard analysis. Construction Safety Nova Scotia does not assume responsibility for the use of information in this document. If assistance is needed to complete a SWP and SJP for your organization please contact CSNS member services at constructionsafetyns.ca or 1.800.971.3888.