

# ANALYSIS OF HOUSE BILL 1800

Establishing needlestick protections.

**SPONSORS:** Representative Eddy and Pflug.

**BACKGROUND:** The federal government estimates that health care workers incur between 600,000 and 1 million needlestick injuries per year. Many of these needles have been used and are potentially contaminated. Of all the bloodborne diseases transmitted by used needles, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) usually raises the most concern. However, there are up to 20 other bloodborne diseases that can be transmitted to health care workers as a result of exposure to blood on the job. Of these, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C pose the most serious threat to health care workers. Experts now estimate that more health care workers will eventually die due to complications from occupational exposure to Hepatitis C than from HIV.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) must adopt emergency rules by September 1999 (and six months after adopt permanent rules) governing occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens such as Hepatitis B virus, Hepatitis C virus, and HIV.

The emergency rules must require each employer to conduct product evaluations of needleless systems and sharps which must be conducted by front-line health care workers representing all wards and medical specialties where they are used. The product evaluation period should continue for not less than six months from the date of commencement.

L&I must consider additional revisions to the bloodborne pathogen standard to prevent sharps injuries or exposure incidents including training and educational requirements, measures to increase vaccination strategies, placement of sharps containers, and increased use of personal protective equipment.

The Department of Health must compile and maintain a list of existing needleless systems and sharps with engineer sharps injury protection that is available to assist employers in complying with these requirements.