

Are You Properly Assessing Risk when the Call Comes in?

Scott Vogel | *American Bio Recovery Association*

Too often in the cleaning industry, we see many companies trying to tackle a project that is completely outside of their “wheelhouse.” The lure of making a profit on a job is always there but what are the exposures?

Even in the Bio Recovery industry, we find responders that jump at the chance of a job, after all, the industry is usually 100% event driven. By the time an insurance carrier arrives to evaluate the claim, mitigation is finished or almost completed. Many cleaning company owners think it is “just blood” but, when you look at the variables that can arise, one can quickly become overwhelmed.

In 2016, The American Bio Recovery Association (ABRA) embarked on developing a guidance document to help responders understand the perils they face regarding Bio Recovery mitigation projects. In fact, the Bio Recovery industry is getting more and more dangerous for contractors.

Recently, I was a keynote speaker at the World Congress on Infectious Diseases and heard another presenter outline the terrifying reality that the very threats we are attempting to mitigate are becoming more resistant to existing prophylaxis. Variations of virus are putting us at risk for pandemic conditions – we are only a plane, train or subway ride away and pharma research is running out of new antibiotics.

To add insult to injury, ABRA-member companies and technicians are faced with a new threat – Fentanyl and Carfentanil are being pumped into the United States at an alarming rate. Throughout the United States, the DEA and DHS have had major busts with exposure threats. Now we have contamination from a decomposing body and cross-contamination from a potential killer throughout a dwelling. In addition, several properties have been used as clandestine laboratories with compounding pill press operations, the pill usually disguised as an over-the-counter product.

To address this threat, ABRA has been reaching out to individuals with experience in Bio Recovery, Biological Safety and Clandestine drug labs to develop a new guideline to help contractors develop a scope of work to mitigate the risk to their response crews. These guidelines will help a contractor determine if they can accept a project or need to refer it to a more specialized provider.

Key Takeaways:

Similar in set up to an Infection Control Risk Assessment in a healthcare setting, process details include:

- Intelligence gathering on the call – front end management
- Determine the type of risk present – determination of risk group
- Identify the risk-group impacted area
- Determine class (I – IV) of required risk mitigation measures
- Risk mitigation guidelines/precautions/engineering controls/cross-contamination prevention
- Life safety assessment
- Response team sign-off

While there are always variables that fall outside of written guidelines, this will, at a minimum, offer a framework for safety and proper mitigation techniques. This will not, however, replace formal education or certification of your technicians.

Visit the American Bio Recovery Association website at www.americanbiorecovery.org for more information. The BSRA Guidance Form can be found under “Education/Guidelines and Standards.” The document is free to download and can be used by anyone entering the Bio

Recovery industry. ABRA welcomes constructive criticism for BSRA as our goal is to offer and promote education for best industry practices.

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