INSTRUCTIONS: Every employee covered by the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard must read and understand this sheet and then complete EITHER the Hepatitis B Vaccination Consent Form OR the Hepatitis B Vaccination Declination Form.

Viral Hepatitis B (also called serum hepatitis) is a severe liver disease of adults and children and accounts for about one-half of all hepatitis cases in the United States. It is spread between human beings by direct contact with blood in a health care setting, tattoo or acupuncture with unclean needles or instruments, shared needles during drug use, sexual contact with an infected person, shared personal items (such as toothbrushes, razors, and nail clippers) with an infected person, and by blood transfusions (which is not common in the United States). The hepatitis B virus also can be passed to an infant during childbirth if the mother is infected.

Acute Hepatitis B is characterized by fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, enlargement of the liver, jaundice (yellow skin) and occasionally by rash and pain in the joints. About 0.1% of persons die with the acute disease. About 10% of people do not recover from their infection but become carriers of the virus throughout their lifetime. Many people with chronic hepatitis B have few or no symptoms, and may not know they are infected. However, this carrier state is associated closely with the development of cirrhosis of the liver, which can be fatal, and the development of liver cancer.

There is no specific treatment of Hepatitis B available.

Female personnel who are pregnant or who are nursing mothers should consult their health care providers, who must give written authorization prior to the vaccine being administered.

Personnel who have any known cardio-pulmonary compromise should consult their health care providers, who must give written consent prior to the vaccine being administered. Individuals who have well documented allergic reactions to formalin (formaldehyde) or thimerosal (mercury derivative) or yeast should receive special consultation from Health Service personnel prior to the administration of the vaccine.

There is one type of vaccine available. This is synthetic. The vaccine is generally well tolerated. As with any vaccine, there is the possibility that broad use of the vaccine could reveal rare adverse reaction not observed in the clinical trials. Of the reported reactions, approximately half of them were injection site soreness. Low grade fever, less than 101°F, occurs occasionally and is usually confined to the 48-hour period following vaccination. Systemic complaints including malaise, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness, myalgia, and arthralgia are infrequent and have been limited to the first few days following vaccination. Serious reactions are very rare and are mainly due to allergic reactions to a part of the vaccine. If hypersensitivity to yeast is noticed after receiving any injection of the vaccine, Health Services should be notified immediately.

Adult individuals who are not dialysis patients or immunocompromised should receive 3 one ml doses of the vaccine intramuscularly in the deltoid muscle of the arm. The first dose is given at the elected date, the second dose is given one month later and the third dose is given six months after the first dose. The duration of the protective effect of the vaccine is unknown at present.

ALTHOUGH THE VACCINE PROTECTS AGAINST HEPATITIS B, IT DOES NOT PROTECT ONE FROM OTHER INFECTIONS SUCH AS HEPATITIS A OR C, WHICH CAN BE TRANSMITTED BY BLOOD AND OTHER BODY FLUIDS. FOR THIS REASON, TECHNIQUES FOR CAREFUL HANDLING OF THESE FLUIDS CANNOT BE RELAXED.

For questions/assistance contact the Office of Safety and Risk Management at 227-7443, or schedule an appointment with Health Services.