

PROCLAMATION FOR LATEX ALLERGY AWARENESS WEEK

Whereas,

In 1987, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended universal precautions to protect against exposure to blood and certain body fluids, resulting in an increase in the use of latex gloves in a variety of settings;

Latex is produced by rubber trees and processed into a variety of medical and household objects;

Some proteins in latex can cause a range of mild to severe allergic reactions of three types: irritant contact dermatitis, allergic contact dermatitis, and latex allergy. Symptoms include skin rashes, hives, itching, shortness of breath, asthma, and shock;

The amount of exposure needed to cause sensitization is not known, however exposures at even very low levels can trigger allergic reactions in some sensitized individuals;

Studies indicate that six percent to seventeen percent of the exposed healthcare workforce is allergic to natural rubber latex and approximately one percent to six percent of the general population exhibit sensitization to natural rubber latex;

In 1997, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health issued an Alert concerning the danger of exposure to latex products to prevent allergic reactions among workers who use gloves and other products containing latex;

In 1999, the American Journal of Public Health published a cost analysis of health care facilities switching from latex gloves to latex-free glove alternatives and demonstrated the economic benefits of converting to non-latex gloves;

The National Institute of Safety and Health stated that latex allergies could be prevented if employers establish policies that protect both workers and patients from unnecessary latex exposure.

Therefore,

The Department of Health proclaims October 1, 2000 through October 7, 2000 as Latex Allergy Awareness Week in the State of Rhode Island;

The Department of Health will conduct an education program to alert the public regarding natural rubber latex allergy and the potential risks associated with latex exposure;

The Department of Health will ensure latex allergy awareness among health care facilities, day care facilities, and food service and processing establishments;

The Department of Health encourages management strategies to reduce the use of non-sterile disposable latex gloves containing latex allergen protein;

The Department of Health encourages all health care facilities to establish a plan for reducing latex exposure for sensitized patients and employees.