

Hantavirus

Identify areas within the jobsite where rodents could be present.

Explain dangers

Hantavirus is a virus found in the saliva, urine, or droppings of infected wild rodents, including:

- deer mice
- cotton rats
- rice rats
- white footed mice
- red-backed voles

Exposure to the hantavirus can cause a respiratory disease called hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). Symptoms of HPS may appear within 1 to 6 weeks after exposure. Symptoms of HPS include:

- Fever and/or chills
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath

HPS is a serious disease. About 40% of cases are fatal.

You can be exposed to hantavirus by breathing in airborne droplets of saliva or urine, or the dust of feces, of infected rodents. Exposure can also occur if you touch a surface contaminated by rodent urine, feces, or saliva, and then touch your nose or mouth, or if you are bitten by an infected rodent. (Hantavirus is not spread through person-to-person contact.)

Possible areas of exposure include working in crawl spaces, under houses, or in vacant places where rodents are present.

There is no vaccine available to prevent hantavirus pulmonary syndrome.

Identify controls

If you will be working in an area where rodents may have been (or are) present, consider the following controls/practices:

- Ensure you are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when cleaning up any signs of rodents, including dead animals, droppings, urine, etc. At minimum, your PPE should include:
 - Respirator
 - Safety goggles
 - Gloves
 - Rubber boots
- Ventilate the space prior to cleaning up any rodent droppings. Open doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Never dry-sweep or vacuum rodent droppings. This can cause particles to become airborne—and be more likely to be inhaled. Instead, use a spray and pick up droppings with paper towels, or use a wet mop.
- Do not mix disinfectants/cleaners. This can produce toxic gases. Always read the product label prior to use.
- After cleanup, wash your hands and face.
- Always keep your food and water sealed with tight lids.
- Keep lunch tables clean. Do not leave food out in the open.
- Block any openings/holes in the work area through which rodents may enter.

Demonstrate

With your crew, go over areas on site where rodents may be present or hiding.

Identify any precautions that have been taken in the work area, such as where mousetraps have been set up.

Review the proper use of any necessary PPE.