APPENDIX D
INFORMATION ABOUT HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

WHAT IS HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS?
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus found in human blood that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is a life threatening disorder that affects the immune system’s ability to fight off diseases. HIV attacks the white blood cells that play a key role in the body’s immune system. The AIDS patient may suffer from one of many different diseases due to the immune system’s inability to fight off infections. These diseases include forms of cancer and pneumonia. Currently, there is no cure for HIV.

HIV is transmitted through body fluids, mainly blood and semen. An individual can develop AIDS from 2 to 10 years or more after being infected with HIV. In some cases, the virus can be present in the body for 10 or more years before any symptoms occur. An individual does not have to have AIDS, show any symptoms, or even be ill to infect another person with HIV.

BASIS FOR THE EXPOSURE DETERMINATION
HIV can be transmitted from one person to another through acts which result in an exchange of body fluids composed of, or contaminated with, human blood. Currently, HIV is one of the several sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) that pose a very serious world-wide health concern. Transmission through sexual contact is not a consideration for occupational exposure.

In the work environment, an occupational exposure determination is made based upon the likelihood of human blood transmission resulting from the performance of the employee’s assigned duties. This means that human blood from an infected person (source individual) must be passed directly to an employee by way of entry into a mucous membrane (e.g., mouth, nose, eyes), open wound or other form of non-intact skin (i.e., small cut or skin damaged by dermatitis). Employees whose duties include tasks that may generate or involve direct contact with human blood from a source individual are presumed to be at risk of occupational exposure. These include nurses, doctors, dentists, hygienists, and emergency response personnel who are expected to perform first aid or other life-saving functions, such as athletic trainers, police officers, paramedics, and firefighters. Such regular employees are normally classified as employees assigned to “Category I” position classifications.

Employees whose job duties involve less risk of occupational exposure to human blood are classified as those assigned to “Category II” position classifications. Such personnel normally include health care maintenance support personnel, laboratory technicians who do not conduct tests on human blood or human anatomy, and personnel who perform first aid response as a collateral duty (designated first aid responders).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV / AIDS?
Early symptoms of HIV or the onset of AIDS include:

- Swollen glands;
- Chronic fatigue;
- Fever;
- Loss of appetite and weight;
- Diarrhea;
- Yeast infections; and
- Night sweats

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF HIV / AIDS
An increasing number of AIDS cases have caused fears that have led to misconceptions about how HIV can be transmitted. There is no documented evidence that dried blood on a surface is strong enough to transmit HIV. For this reason HIV is not considered an environmental pathogen. In other words, HIV does not live long enough outside of the human body to be considered a threat to employees or to the general public. Although small traces of HIV can be found in tears, saliva, urine and perspiration, extensive studies have shown that there is not enough of the virus present in such samples to be transmitted to other people. Saliva in dental procedures is presumed to be contaminated with blood due to the nature of dental activities. If there is ever a doubt whether human body fluids contain enough blood to be of concern, employees are encouraged to use “Universal Precautions”. This means to assume that the fluids contain bloodborne pathogens and to take preventative measures, accordingly. An individual cannot get HIV from the following:

- Casual contact with an infected person;
- Sharing food, drinking glasses, or towels;
- Sinks or toilets in the bathroom;
- Sharing personal protective equipment such as goggles, respirators, or clothing;
- Sharing tools;
- Mosquitoes or other insects; or
- Being near to someone who is coughing or sneezing.