

A Guide to ANSI/AAMI ST79:2017

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The safe and compliant transportation of sterile and contaminated medical instruments is a critical aspect of infection control in modern healthcare systems. As hospitals increasingly adopt centralized sterilization hubs to streamline operations and enhance efficiency, the role of transport companies like Life Couriers becomes paramount in ensuring patient safety. Adherence to regulatory standards, including ANSI/AAMI ST79:2017, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030, and 49 CFR 173.134, is essential to mitigate risks associated with the transport of these materials. This white paper explores the importance of compliance during transportation and the best practices for ensuring sterility and safety.

ANSI/AAMI ST79:2017: This comprehensive standard provides guidance on steam sterilization and sterility assurance in healthcare facilities. It emphasizes the need for proper packaging, handling, and transport of sterilized instruments to maintain their sterility and ensure they are safe for use in medical procedures. Compliance with ST79 is crucial for preventing contamination during transportation.

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030: This Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulation pertains to bloodborne pathogens and establishes requirements for handling potentially infectious materials. It mandates the use of proper containment, labeling, and employee training to prevent occupational exposure to infectious agents during transportation.

49 CFR 173.134 – Class 6, Division 6.2 Biological Infectious Substances: This regulation under the

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) classifies and governs the transport of infectious substances. Contaminated medical instruments must be handled per these guidelines to ensure that they do not pose a risk to transport personnel, healthcare workers, or the public.

Life Couriers in Ensuring Compliance **Sterile Instrument Transport**

Life Couriers plays a critical role in maintaining the sterility of medical instruments during transport by implementing:

Environmental Controls: Ensuring temperature and humidity conditions remain using a temperature-controlled vehicle within specified limits to prevent compromise of sterilized instruments.

Chain of Custody Documentation: Tracking shipments with detailed records to confirm sterility assurance from the sterilization hub to the end-user facilities.

Contaminated Instrument Transport

To prevent exposure and cross-contamination, Life Couriers adheres to strict protocols, including:

Proper Containment: Using leak-proof, puncture-resistant biohazard containers compliant with OSHA and DOT regulations.

Labeling and Documentation: Clearly marking shipments per 49 CFR 173.134 requirements to identify biohazard risks.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Requiring drivers and handlers to wear appropriate PPE and undergo specialized training on infection control measures.

Decontamination Protocols

Scheduled Cleaning: Vehicles transporting contaminated instruments undergo routine cleaning and disinfection using EPA-approved hospital-grade disinfectants.

Post-Exposure Decontamination: If a spill or leakage occurs, immediate decontamination is performed following biohazard spill response protocols.

Separation of Sterile and Contaminated Loads: Designated storage areas within vehicles ensure that clean and contaminated instruments are never in contact, reducing the risk of exposure.

Best Practices for Compliance

Training and Education: Life Couriers ensures all personnel are well-versed in ANSI/AAMI ST79, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030, and DOT 49 CFR 173.134 regulations.

Standardized Procedures: Establishing documented SOPs for the secure handling and transport of both sterile and contaminated instruments.

Quality Assurance: Regular audits and compliance checks to validate adherence to regulatory standards.

Emergency Preparedness: Implementing spill response protocols and contingency plans for accidental exposure incidents.

Compliance in the transportation of sterile and contaminated medical instruments is vital for patient safety and infection control. By adhering to ANSI/AAMI ST79:2017, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030, and 49 CFR 173.134, Life Couriers ensures that hospitals relying on centralized sterilization hubs maintain the highest standards of sterility and biohazard containment. Through rigorous training, adherence to best practices, and a commitment to regulatory compliance, Life Couriers supports healthcare systems in delivering safe and effective patient care.