NIOSH Workplace Safety & Health Topics
Fentanyl: Preventing Occupational Exposure to Emergency Responders

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recently updated its Emergency Responders web page to provide interim information on fentanyl and its analogs. Below are some highlights from the page.

According to the NIOSH web page, Law enforcement officials are seeing an increase in the use of Illicitly-manufactured fentanyl and its analogs. In addition to being produced illicitly in a powder form, fentanyl or its analogs are also being pressed into counterfeit tablets of commonly misused prescription opioids. These substances are also being found in samples of cocaine, methamphetamine and other non-opioid substances.

Exposure to fentanyl or its analogs via inhalation or skin absorption can be deadly. Carfentanil, a fentanyl analog, can be deadly in the 2 mg range. Another risk to law enforcement and first responders is when naloxone is administered as an antidote, which may result in violent behavior from the patient.

Below is a link to the main page where you will find three additional links to specific information covering: “Protecting Workers At Risk”; “Resources”; and “Illegal Use of Fentanyl”

https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/default.html

The “Protecting Workers At Risk” page includes interim guidance for personal protective equipment, including respirator and glove guidance. It is important to note that this is interim guidance and that every operation is different and will need to be assessed for its unique risks.