



## Fast Facts on Hantavirus

- ◆ About 200 cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome occur each year, primarily in North and South America. The average case fatality rate is 40%.
- ◆ Since 1989, there have been 109 confirmed cases and 27 deaths in Canada due to a hantavirus infection.
- ◆ There have been 31 cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome reported in Saskatchewan since 1994. Ten of them resulted in death.
- ◆ There are no vaccines available to prevent a hantavirus infection.
- ◆ The virus does not remain active for long once outside of its host – less than 1 week outdoors and a few hours when exposed to direct sunlight.
- ◆ The National Microbiology Laboratory is the only laboratory in Canada that:
  - conducts diagnostic testing for hantavirus infections in humans
  - analyzes trends in hantavirus pulmonary syndrome cases in Canada
  - carries out field investigations into hantavirus infection cases across Canada

## What is Hantavirus

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause severe illness in humans. People can become infected with a hantavirus when they:

- ◆ Inhale virus particles from rodent urine, droppings or saliva that have been released into the air. This can happen when rodent waste is stirred up from vacuuming or sweeping.
- ◆ Touch objects or eat food contaminated with the urine, droppings or saliva of infected rodents.
- ◆ Be bitten by a rodent infected with a hantavirus (this is rare).

With the exception of the Andes hantavirus, the virus does not spread through person-to-person contact.



## Prevention

In a recent media release, “health officials are reminding residents about the risk of hantavirus this spring in areas potentially infested by rodents. People are most often exposed when cleaning up enclosed buildings (such as grain bins, sheds, barns, garages, trailers, cottages and homes) or farm equipment and vehicles after winter.” Keep your home, workplace, cottage or campsite rodent-free. All rodent droppings are potentially harmful. You should:

- ◆ Block openings that might let rodents in.
- ◆ Store food, water & garbage in containers with tight lids.
- ◆ Place mousetraps throughout buildings.
- ◆ Keep your yard clean.
- ◆ Stack woodpiles away from buildings.

To properly clean and disinfect areas contaminated by rodent droppings, follow the steps below.

- ◆ Ventilate the building by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes before cleaning.
- ◆ Wear rubber or plastic gloves. If you are cleaning in a confined space, wear a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtered respirator and goggles.
- ◆ Do not sweep or vacuum rodent droppings. This will release particles into the air, which you could then breathe in.
- ◆ Spray droppings with a household disinfectant or a mixture of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Let the area soak for 10 minutes to make sure any virus within the droppings will be killed.
- ◆ Wipe up wet droppings with paper towels or a wet mop if dealing with a large area.
- ◆ Wash gloves in disinfectant and hot soapy water before taking them off. Afterwards, wash your hands thoroughly.

## Resources

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/diseases-and-conditions/hantavirus>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/hantaviruses.html>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/how-to-avoid-hantavirus-saskatchewan-1.4050293>

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/hantavir.html>



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# How To Use This Resource

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers, is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose to - inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, Informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up to date on the Information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance and any follow up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.



One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks. Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun, and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks](http://www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks)

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: [www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool\\_Box\\_Meeting.pdf](http://www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf)

## ABOUT THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded non-profit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees throughout the province. Companies that are registered with Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and fall under the CLASS B – BUILDING CONSTRUCTION rate class are members of the SCSA. SCSA members and supporter members receive preferred pricing on classroom training year-round. The SCSA equips more than 10,000 workers each year with the education and training they need to achieve their organization's safety goals.



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