

## HSE Bulletin (Ref.: 20 in 2013)

# Hidden Hypodermic Needles

Date of issue: 18 September 2013

Date of expiry 16/12/2013

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### Background

As a Stations Works Improvement Project contractor removed a wall panel on the disused spiral staircase at Finsbury Park Station, a hypodermic syringe fell down from behind it. No injury was reported. Work in the area was immediately suspended, the incident reported, and the syringe was dealt with correctly as a 'sharps' item by the station supervisor. The incident could have been much worse had the syringe caused a needle-stick injury. Luckily in this case the needle had a cap in place.

This safety bulletin has been issued to raise awareness of the unusual places where syringes are discovered and the potential severity of a needle-stick injury.

### Instruction

Care should always be taken when opening or exploring areas that are not clearly visible. When reviewing works to remove any panel, ceiling tiles or other places where objects can be hidden the risk assessment must consider the hazards of hypodermic syringes disposed of by drug users. The site briefing should also cover this issue even if it is a previously or currently disused area that has no public access.

Health risks from needle-stick injuries include hepatitis and other infections arising from contamination following injection through the skin.

The risk to eyes should also be considered. Anti syringe gloves can be cumbersome and PPE should be used as a last resort. Consider methods to check hidden areas using torches and mirrors to identify objects discarded above or behind tiles or panels.

Everyone is reminded to be alert to the risk from needles and sharp objects that can be found anywhere on the LU network, and they should take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and their colleagues.

Anyone sustaining injury from a hypodermic syringe or needle must be sent immediately to the nearest hospital with an accident and emergency department with the syringe or needle in an approved 'sharps' container. Wherever possible they should be accompanied by their supervisor or by a work colleague.

**Please communicate this alert to your teams, projects and suppliers as appropriate**

Incident reference	50025
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