



IAQ RADIO

Thomas Licker, CEICR, CBRM

Sr. VP First Onsite & Board President ABRA

Responding to Fentanyl, Crime, Trauma & Other Biorecovery Situations

Good Day and welcome to the IAQ Radio+ episode 693 blog. This week we welcomed Thomas Licker of First Onsite and the American Biorecovery Association discuss responding to fentanyl, crime, trauma & other biorecovery situations.

Tom Licker is Senior Vice President, Regulatory Business Practice at First Onsite. He specializes in environmental, biorecovery and infection control services. Tom is also Board President for American Bio recovery Association (ABRA) in Washington, DC. Tom has over 25 years of professional experience that includes managing the investigation and remediation of industrial, commercial and residential properties. Tom's degree is from Slippery Rock University in Environmental Sciences.

Nuggets mined from today's episode:

Tell us about your current position and team at First Onsite? First Onsite understands the nature and special requirements of highly regulated business sectors such as: HAZMAT, healthcare, pharmaceutical manufacturing, asbestos abatement, HVAC cleaning etc. First Onsite is committed to providing a high and consistent level of service & expertise in the regulated business sectors in which we work. Tom is responsible for developing and delivering education on special regulatory matters to our production employees and sales staff and overseeing the delivery of these services to our clients.

What is ABRA? The American Bio Recovery Association (ABRA) is the only third party non-profit organization dedicated to the education and certification of technicians and companies in the Bio Recovery Industry.

<https://www.americanbiorecovery.org>

What is Biorecovery? Biorecovery is the act of assessing risk, mitigating threats and remediating conditions resulting from the release of biological hazards. This may include crime and trauma mitigation (bloodborne and body fluids), suicide cleanup, outbreak response, zoonotic diseases, foodborne diseases, public health threats, illicit drugs and clandestine drug labs.

Do you need a license to perform biorecovery? Crime scene cleanup is licensed in Georgia and California.

What are Biological Hazards? Also known as biohazards, refer to biological substances that pose a threat to the health of living organisms, primarily that of humans. This can include medical waste or samples of a microorganism, virus or toxin (from a biological source) that can affect human health. It can also include substances harmful to other animals.

What type of products do you and other biorecovery firms work on?

- Unattended Death (Decomposition)
- Mass-Casualties (Shootings)
- Transportation Accidents (Train, Auto, Bus, and Airlines)
- Outbreak Response (Ebola Crisis)
- Bio-Terrorism (911 Anthrax Attacks)
- Acts of Violence and Terrorism (Murder and Suicide)
- Healthcare Facilities (Hospitals)
- Pharmaceutical Plants (Clean-room) & Clandestine Drug Lab decontamination.
- Food Production Facilities
- Laboratories (Biosafety) (Compounding)

How long does it take for decomposition odors to be noticeable? Depending on temperature and other conditions, as little as 24-48 hours. Hoarders are known to become desensitized to decomposition odors.

What is your biggest fear? Fentanyl. Fentanyl is cheap to make and Mexican drug cartels use it to afford an extra level of high to users. Fentanyl is 100X stronger than morphine. Carfentanil, a large animal tranquilizer, is even stronger and is showing up in the field.

What is the leading environmental hazard in unattended death scenes? Fentanyl. In Philadelphia, there was a fatal fentanyl overdose. First responders extracted the victim. Three days later the roommate returns and ODs on fentanyl. Fentanyl can kill through ingestion, inhalation and absorption, Friends and family of known drug users need to be very careful. Make frequent wellness calls and checks. When entering places where drugs are used wear PPE.

Fentanyl demographics? Fentanyl use crosses all demographics. Pain centers AKA “pill mills” had full waiting rooms and lines of “patients” addicted to oxycontin. When mills were regulated out of business, addicts turned to the streets. Cartels make counterfeit drugs and packaging which look like the real medications. One dose of counterfeit medication laced with fentanyl or carfentanil can kill. In addition to loss of lives, fentanyl is responsible for economic damage: drug treatment, hazardous drug lab cleanups, contamination of law enforcement vehicles and equipment, etc.

Finding Employees? The skilled trades are in trouble. Mike Rowe calls Biorecovery, the dirtiest of jobs. Finding suitable staff is challenging. When interviewing potential employees for biorecovery work, ask if they are really fit for this work? Be careful not to trigger PTSD in potential employees who have personally experienced a traumatic event. Workers who care about other people, are empathetic and compassionate. Retired EMTs, policemen, firemen, hospice care workers, etc. FirstOnsite provides financial incentives for workers who volunteer to work on biorecovery projects. Police, EMTs, hospice workers, firemen know how to talk to family and relatives of victims.

How do you ensure payment? In some cases, there are insurance proceeds. Clients can charge 1 day’s service from the trauma team on a credit card, then reevaluate. Clients can use home equity line of credit, or home equity loan to pay. It’s more complicated in a condo or co-op building when there are other owners, tenants, etc.

The “Right to Know”, the Open Public Records Act of New Jersey (“OPRA”) was created to give the public greater access to government records such as permits, approvals, reports and more. OPRA, if used properly, can provide prospective purchasers with a wealth of knowledge at little cost or no cost.

How do you minimize psychological stress on your employees? An open door policy so that employees who wish to talk to management can. Debrief employees after every job either individually or in group. ABRA membership provides understanding colleagues to talk to.

What decon chemicals do you use?

Steri-Mist- Ionized Hydrogen Peroxide

Foaming products- (oxidizers+surfactant, e.g. deFcon foam (peracetic acid, hydrogen peroxide and surfactant)

Enzyme products- digest protein

Nonpathogenic bacteria based products; penetrate following the path of water digest protein.

Apply Sporidical product at end of project.

Uses hydroxyl generators for odor removal only.

Does not encourage worker exposure to hydroxyl radicals or Steri-Mist, workers wear full face respirators.

Biorecovery project workflow:

- Safety First
- Site Risk Assessment- gather intelligence,
- Job Safety Analysis & BSRA crew signs off on
- Don PPE
- Address cleanup from entry to path of extraction,
- Address gross contamination
- HEPA vacuum dried blood as it can become airborne.
- Foaming products
- Enzyme products- digest protein
- Nonpathogenic bacteria based products, penetrate following the path of water digest protein
- Apply Sporidical product at end of project.

What about disposal of debris from biorecovery or drug lab projects? Disposal of debris from drug cleanup sites is not classified as hazardous YET.

Body fluid contaminated porous materials:

Mattresses and upholstered furniture are stripped, metal removed and cleaned and disinfected, soft goods disposed as medical waste and incinerated. Unfinished wood and drywall considered porous material.

How can home inspectors protect themselves from fentanyl exposure? Use your best judgement. Only do what you feel comfortable doing. Fentanyl and methamphetamine test strips are available. Have Narcan available.

Toms' Tips:

- Always Consider possible exposures, including big picture exposures (chemical + biological) (e.g. illegal dump sites).
- HAZWOPER assume the worst and downgrade as appropriate.
- Warning, soap and water only! don't use alcohol hand sanitizers around fentanyl, the alcohol carries fentanyl through skin.
- Fentanyl and methamphetamine are commonly found in dust (ceiling fans, HVAC coils, backs of TVs, air ducts, etc.)
- Due to their liability concerns, its challenging finding Industrial Hygienists who will do PRV on drug scenes.
- Financial opportunity. Doing hypodermic needle sweeps in big cities (Seattle, Portland, etc.)
- Is this type of work covered by insurance? Maybe under vandalism

Roundup-Tom's Final Comments:

- Safety First
- Use the buddy system.
- Training is available: HAZWOPER, Blood Borne Pathogens, ABRA courses
- Get Narcan, things are getting worse not better!
- Always err on the side of caution.

Z-Man signing off

References:

- <https://www.americanbiorecovery.org>
- https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.americanbiorecovery.org/resource/resmgr/docs/guidance_documents/bio_recovery_risk_assessment.pdf
- <https://www.osha.gov/anthrax/control-prevention>