

PBA thanks American Police Beat for these timely articles affecting law enforcement.

Staph infections are on the rise, cops beware

Take steps to protect yourself and your family

By Ted Hunt

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) or Staph/MRSA is a serious public health problem particularly among peace officers and medical care providers.

MRSA is an highly contagious bacterial skin infection that does not respond well to medication. Staph infections are usually treated with the antibiotic Methicillin.

What makes MRSA so serious is its resistance to Methicillin. In other words, taking a pill may not cure you.

A second problem with treating MRSA is that the symptoms are quite similar to those of a spider bite, which means MRSA is often incorrectly identified and incorrectly treated.

Law enforcement officers are at the greatest risk of exposure to MRSA in jails and hospitals. If you work in or visit either of those environments, or if you have frequent contact with people who work in those environments, you should take precautions to ensure that you do not contract or transmit MRSA.

What does it look like? It looks like a spider bite. The skin appears red and inflamed around the wound site. The surrounding tissue will be tender and/or swollen. MRSA can also appear as a rash, pimples, abscesses, boils or blisters. If there is an open wound, it will probably have oozing pus. The discharge is highly contagious.

How is it spread? According to the Centers for Disease Control, "Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with other infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Infection may also occur through indirect

contact by touching objects (i.e., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria."

What can I do to protect myself?

1. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, particularly after booking someone or going to the hospital.
2. Wear rubber or surgical gloves when touching or searching suspects, or when touching places where an infected person may have also touched, such as the booking counter.
3. If you have cuts or abrasions, keep them clean and properly dressed with an appropriate bandage.
4. Thoroughly and regularly clean any surfaces which people touch all the time. Examples include the front desk at your station, the booking counter, and your cruiser.

Some of the people peace officers contact daily are physically dirty and disease-ridden. They can easily transmit micro-organisms to you which can expose you and your family to serious illness.

The first line of defense for you is cleanliness. Antibacterial gels available in many police stations can also be used as a line of protections.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety were used for this article.

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MRSA infection in its early stages can look very much like a spider bite.

Bad Bosses... Why do so many treat cops like crap?

By Herbert Blake

Have you ever worked for someone you considered a bad boss? For too many employees in policing, the answer is yes. Scores of them exist.

A bad boss can literally kill you. If you are a supervisor, you should ask yourself if you have the destructive tendencies of a bad boss.

One author on leadership suggests that trust is akin to virginity, you only lose it once.

A key characteristic of a good, effective leader is that their followers trust them at all times. Bad bosses seem to always forfeit trust somewhere along the line.

They appear to have a personal mission statement that implies: "The mission of this agency during my supervision is to ensure that strife and discord are prevalent in the workplace, at all times."

Bad bosses have a "do as I say, not as I do" mind-set. They contribute to the departures of the department's best employees.

Gossip and rumor mongering is the primary method of communications because they foster and feed the rumor mill.

People in their employ cannot speak the truth without fear of retaliation. These guys are also phonies and poor communicators. They will interrupt you before you are finished talking. They read their mail and answer their telephones as you try to communicate something important.

Bad bosses are frequently overly critical of their employees when they do not have to be. They tend to repeatedly violate a key tenet when dealing with people: criticizing them in public and feeling in charge when they do.

What's more, they cannot be counted on to defend their employees in their absence. If the village idiot said you were rude or unprofessional during an encounter, as far as these bosses are concerned, you are guilty as charged. Bad bosses

see every mistake and every deficiency in others; but they and their inner circles are never wrong.

They believe employees perform better under the spirit of criticism, not the spirit of approval. They fail to recognize and reward the true top performers. They believe in directives and procedures more than they believe in people. When one person does something wrong, everyone gets a memo.

Other blunders committed by bad bosses include their tendencies to traffic in gossip. If they talk about you to me, guaranteed they're talking about me to you.

Still another disturbing tendency is their need to talk about the good old days—about how the officers of their generation were so much better than those of today. A further truth is that bad bosses value face time more than they do autonomy and productivity. They foster environments of insecurity as well, because they are so insecure.

Bad bosses tend to be extremely jealous of the department's brightest stars. Indeed, those with the most potential in the organization become their "worthy adversaries." Their jealousies and insecurities typically prompt the promotion of cronies and yes-men to supervisory positions.

Bad bosses are bad bosses because they consistently break the laws of good leadership and violate those interpersonal rules that affect the people who work in their organizations. A bad boss can literally kill you.

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Dave Barry:

Let's remember that WE have plenty of problems right here in the U.S.A., in crime-wracked hellhole cities such as Sudbury, Mass., where the following item appeared in the Police Log section of the *Sudbury Town Crier*, sent in by alert reader Lew Weinstein:

"4:15 p.m.: A Silver Hill Road resident reported there was a wild animal in her house. Police responded and found a rotting potato, which they removed."

This incident serves as a chilling reminder that our ultimate defense against crime is the "thin blue line" of police officers, who daily put their lives on the line for us, never knowing when they will find themselves in a dark hallway eye-to-eye with a decomposing tuber, or — God forbid — a full-grown member of the zucchini family, which every year kills more Americans than all other forms of squash combined. So the next time you see a police officer, take a moment to express your gratitude. You might also point out that "Decomposing Tubers" would be a good name for a rock band.