

<b>Safety Bulletin No.</b>	2019 04	<b>Date Issued</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2019
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Melioidosis warning</b>		
<b>Area of Concern</b>	Hydro excavation & similar works		
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This safety bulletin has been prepared due to a Top End worker recently contracting Melioidosis. This is a timely reminder about the precautions that must be undertaken by contractors conducting hydro excavation and similar work.

## What is Melioidosis?

Melioidosis is a disease caused by bacteria known as *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. The bacteria live below the soil's surface during the dry season but after heavy rainfall are found in surface water & mud and may become airborne. The bacterial infection can be fatal with melioidosis requiring urgent medical attention and treatment.

## How is it spread?

The bacteria that causes Melioidosis usually enters the body via cuts & sores in the skin or via inhalation of dust or droplets and very rarely by ingestion of contaminated water.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of melioidosis vary depending on the site of the infection. Often it starts as a chest infection with shortness of breath, productive cough & fever. Symptoms can also include fever with headache & confusion, with a gradual or sudden onset usually between 1-21 days from time of contact.

In some cases, the illness may come on much more slowly with weight loss, intermittent fever, chest pain and a cough. Some people may present with skin ulcers, boils or joint or bone infections. There have also been cases where the disease has caused illness many years after the initial infection. In these cases, the bacteria have been carried by the person and have become active due to a weakening of the immune system.

## How can we reduce the risk when exposed to wet soils?

When conducting hydro excavation or similar works at DIA, contractors must as a minimum:

- **Wear waterproof shoes or boots,**
- **Wear gloves and safety glasses/goggles**
- **Wear long sleeved, hi viz, shirts & trousers,**
- **Wear a suitable P2 dust mask or better (when working in the spray zone),**
- **Wounds should be promptly & thoroughly washed clean & covered,**
- **Use pump to control water ingress when working in excavations,**
- **Ensure safe work method statements (SWMS) are updated to reflect these requirements & enforced.**



Good example of PPE

(This bulletin was produced referencing the NT Government – Centre for Disease Control fact sheet dated December 2015.)