



**U.S. Department of Labor**  
Occupational Safety & Health Administration

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**Standard Interpretations**

**11/24/1993 - Extracted teeth potentially infectious materials.**

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• **Standard Number:** 1910.1030

November 24, 1993

The Honorable Bent Conrad  
United States Senator  
657 2nd Avenue North Room 306  
Fargo, North Dakota 58102

Dear Senator Conrad:

This is in response to your letter of September 25, which you wrote on behalf of your constituent, Mr. Gordon Sorum. Mr. Sorum contacted you because his oral surgeon refused to return an extracted tooth to him and informed him that "OSHA prohibits him from returning teeth that have been extracted from patients." The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) appreciates the opportunity to clarify this matter.

Under the Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030), OSHA considers extracted teeth to be potentially infectious material when they are being disposed of, used as diagnostic specimens, or sent to dental schools for student use. As such, they are to be handled in a particular manner in order to prevent occupational transmission of disease to employees who come into contact with them.

However, there is nothing in the standard which would prevent a dentist from giving patients their own extracted teeth when the patient desires them since the intent of the standard is to prevent exposure of employees to the blood of other individuals, not to protect individuals from their own blood. At the same time, it would be unacceptable for a healthcare provider to require that a patient take all of the contaminated items generated during their care in order to circumvent the standard's regulated waste requirements.

We hope this information is responsive to your constituent's concerns and thank you for your interest in worker safety and health.

Sincerely,

Roger A. Clark, Director  
Directorate of Compliance Programs