Is This a Safe Way to Clean Ebola-Infected Materials?



What's wrong with this picture?



A little explanation is in order:

This photo, which was taken by a news helicopter, shows the Texas apartment community of Thomas Eric Duncan. In case you haven't heard the name, Mr. Duncan, aka "Patient Zero" is the first person in the US to be diagnosed with the Ebola virus.

The people in the picture are workers at the apartment community using a power washer to clean away Mr. Duncan's vomit. This is a very, very bad idea! There are 3 reasons why.

Reason 1: Mr. Duncan's vomit is infected with Ebola.

Reason 2: Pressure from the power washer causes the infected vomit to become airborne in the form of an aerosol mist

Reason 3: People—like the workers or tenants—may breathe in the tiny droplets of infected mist that linger in the air.

The Moral: Vomit and other bodily fluids infected with Ebola should not be cleaned with compressed air, pressurized water sprays or other methods that can create infected mists. The workers performing the cleanup operation should also be wearing proper PPE, including gloves, eye and face protection and surgical masks.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Ebola Is Dangerous

The Ebola virus causes illnesses that are not only potentially fatal but contagious.

HOW YOU CAN GET EBOLA

The Risks of Infection

The good news is that Ebola is not *very* contagious. It generally doesn't spread as a result of airborne exposure the way some other viruses like measles and influenza do. That means you can't get infected with Ebola as a result of casual contact like getting sneezed or coughed on.

But you can get it by making direct contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of a person or animal that's infected with Ebola. Such contact is most likely to happen to:

- Healthcare workers and emergency medical responders who treat or encounter Ebola patients;
- Lab workers who handle blood or materials of infected patients;
- Airline and other travel workers, border guards and custom agents who encounter Ebola patients traveling to the US from parts of Africa and other locations where Ebola outbreaks have occurred; and
- Mortuary or death care workers who work with infected corpses.

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM INFECTION

1. Wear protective gloves to prevent contaminated blood and bodily fluids from making contact with open sores or being absorbed through the skin of your hands

2. After taking off your gloves, wash your hands and throw the dirty gloves in properly labelled biohazard containers

3. Wear a surgical mask or other appropriate respiratory equipment

4. Wear goggles, face shields or other appropriate eye and face protection

5. Wear gowns, aprons or fluid-resistant clothing to protect against being splattered or splashed with infected materials

6. Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rubs immediately before and after handling contaminated material and after removing protective gloves

7. When cleaning infectious materials, don't use compressed air, power washers or similar methods that generate contaminated mists

8. Seek immediate medical help if you develop fever of 101.5°F/38.6°C and any of the other following symptoms:

    Headache
    Muscle pain
    Diarrhea
    Vomiting
    Stomach pain
    Unexplained bruising or bleeding.