

NORTHWOOD TECHNICAL COLLEGE
SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY
STUDENT POLICIES

OCCUPATIONAL RISKS

Participation in the Surgical Technology Apprenticeship Program requires engagement in clinical/hospital environments that may pose certain occupational risks. In alignment with professional standards and accrediting agency expectations, all apprentices must be aware of and understand the inherent risks associated with surgical technology practice. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens and Infectious Diseases

Apprentices will routinely work in sterile and non-sterile areas where they may come into contact with blood, body fluids, tissues, and contaminated instruments or equipment. Despite standard precautions and infection control measures, there is a risk of exposure to pathogens such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C.

2. Sharps and Instrument-Related Injuries

Handling surgical instruments, needles, scalpels, and other sharps presents a risk of accidental cuts or punctures. Strict adherence to sharps safety protocols and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) are essential to minimize injury.

3. Physical Strain and Musculoskeletal Injuries

Surgical technologists must stand for extended periods, move and lift heavy instrument trays, and perform tasks requiring fine motor coordination. Improper body mechanics or prolonged repetitive movements may lead to physical strain or musculoskeletal disorders.

4. Chemical and Anesthetic Agent Exposure

Apprentices may be exposed to chemicals used for sterilization and disinfection, as well as trace levels of anesthetic gases. Proper ventilation, PPE, and training in the safe handling of chemicals and materials are mandated.

5. Laser and Electrosurgical Equipment Hazards

Operating rooms may use laser and electrosurgical equipment, which poses risks such as burns, electrical shock, or eye injury. Training in laser safety and the use of protective barriers is required.

6. Noise and Environmental Stressors

Operating rooms can be high-stress environments with elevated noise levels and high expectations for performance. This may contribute to mental and emotional fatigue if not properly managed.

7. Latex Sensitivity or Allergies

While many facilities are moving toward latex-free environments, apprentices may still encounter latex-containing products. Individuals with known allergies must notify the program director and clinical sites to ensure appropriate accommodation.

8. Radiation Exposure

In procedures involving fluoroscopy or other radiologic imaging, there is a potential for radiation exposure. Lead aprons, thyroid shields, and adherence to ALARA (As Low As Reasonably Achievable) principles are standard safety measures.