

# Tip of the Month



## Confessions of a Lab Coat

**D**octor, can you help me? You see, I'm a Lab Coat who's experiencing an identity crisis. According to the yarns spun by those who came before me, it all started with OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. Until then, being a Lab Coat was a snap. But that was long before all the safety hoopla, when the only thing expected from us was to make health-care professionals look professional, and TV actors look like doctors. WE were never expected to DO anything.

Now I find myself working in a garment district that has lots of rules and regulations. Where the most important jobs are not only about appearances, but providing protection to humans who may be exposed to blood splashes, spray, spatter or other nasty stuff considered potentially infectious. Even if you're cut from the right cloth, there are additional qualifications you have to meet to penetrate this job market. First, an employer has to determine if protection is even necessary based on the duties the staff performs. If so, then we Lab Coats must compete against gowns, aprons, clinic jackets and other fringe elements to see who's best suited for the job.

And that's not all. You've heard the saying "you can never go home again"? Nothing is truer for a Lab Coat who's officially assigned to a personal protection detail. That's because we may encounter agents that can harm humans, so we're not allowed to venture outside our work areas. Lab Coats who break the rules by going with employees into public places or to their homes to be laundered can kiss their PPE career goodbye. It's a line you don't want to cross because there are plenty of disposable coats just hanging around to take your place.

I've also learned that Lab Coats who provide protection have to keep things close to the vest. That means while we're on duty, we've always got to be zipped tight or buttoned up. Lab Coats who leave themselves open also leave their human open to occupational exposure. But making a human understand this can wear a guy out...

Thanks for listening, Doc. It's obvious I can't pattern myself after my glamorous White Coat ancestors. Life is about more than simply looking good. It's about finding a higher purpose and where you fit. And now that I've realized it, I'm on the hook to do it.