



SAFETY ALERT

WSACT SA 0052 - Clinical Waste

Disposal of Clinical Waste- Sharps and Needles. Incident.

This Safety Alert is issued to inform persons of their responsibilities regarding the disposal of sharps and needles and the containers used for the collection of these.

WorkSafe ACT has received notification of potentially dangerous work situations where workers involved in the waste disposal and waste recycling industry are exposed to the risk of needle stick injury from isolated needles and containers of used needles in the waste stream. Waste processing workers have received needle stick injuries.

Contributing factors.

Hypodermic needles are classified as clinical waste by the Clinical Waste Act 1990. Needles present a high risk to people when not disposed of correctly. Needle stick injuries may result in the infection of persons with biological or other agents. The Act provides for strict disposal procedures for sharps and needles. Negligent disposal of needles or sharps containers in a way that may cause injury or disease to someone dealing with the waste is a serious problem and an offence under the Act. Appropriate management of the risks associated with sharps and needles is a required safety duty under the Work Safety Act 2008.

Recommendations.

1. All premises, workplaces, businesses and undertakings must have policies and procedures to deal with used or unwanted sharps and needles. Arrangements must be made for the safe collection and disposal of needles. An approved sharps bin meeting Australian Standards AS: 4031, AS: 4261 should be used for needle collection. Premises requiring disposal of used sharps and infectious waste, can purchase sharps containers from medical suppliers and an arrangement can be made with an approved company for the regular disposal. Used sharps and infectious waste cannot be placed into general rubbish or

recycling material. City Rangers can be contacted to deal with needles in public places.



2. Workplaces must ensure that sharps containers are not emptied by cleaners or other staff into waste or that used containers are not placed in general waste or recycled waste streams. The ACT Clinical Waste Manual states that the generator of sharps waste should put the name of the generator on the outside of each container. This will allow any inappropriate disposal to be identified and allow steps to be taken to improve sharps disposal procedures in the workplace.
3. Contractors and builders undertaking demolition work must ensure that all sharps/ needle containers have been removed from the structure prior to demolition. This will ensure that no containers are included in building or demolition rubble taken for recycling or reprocessing.
4. Develop risk management policies and procedures to deal with your sharps disposal issues. Implement procedures



to ensure needles and containers do not enter your waste or recycling stream.

5. Ensure your staff are aware of your procedures
6. Arrange for approved collection and disposal of your sharps containers
7. Develop an emergency procedure and equipment to deal with a needle found in your workplace
8. Develop a needlestick response procedure
9. Label your sharps containers with your workplace/ location name
10. Ensure all sharps containers are removed prior to the demolition or decommissioning of any structure or building.

Further Information.

- Work Safety Act 2008
- Clinical Waste Act 1990
- Clinical waste Manual 1991
- Work Safety- ACT Code of Practice for First Aid in the Workplace.
- Work Safety- National Code of Practice for the Control of work related exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (blood borne) Viruses.
- No waste ACT
- ACT Health

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Further information

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