



Guidelines for safe handling and disposal of sharps

I. Purpose

- A. The purpose of this document is to minimize bodily injury, illness, and loss of work caused by the improper handling or disposal of sharps (needles, blades, pipettes & tips, broken glass & ceramics, cut metal & shavings, etc.).

II. Definitions

- A. Sharps (OSHA): Sharps are objects that can penetrate a worker's skin, such as needles, scalpels, broken glass, capillary tubes and the exposed ends of dental wires.

III. Guidelines for safe handling and disposal of sharps

- A. Sharps should be handled using proper equipment and technique:
 1. Sharps should not be touched by bare hands. Protective clothing, such as leather or cut-resistant gloves and shoes without exposed toes, must be worn.
 2. When possible, mechanical means (such as a brush and dust pan, tongs, or forceps) should be used.
 3. If the sharps are contaminated with hazardous materials, or with human blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM, as defined in the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens standard [29 CFR 1910.1030]), consult the UW [Hazardous Materials Spill Emergency Response Plan](#) or the [Biohazardous Waste Disposal](#) guidelines (see www.uwyo.edu/ehs).
- B. Sharps need to be disposed into proper containers, NOT in bags, recycling or trash cans.
 1. Sharps disposal containers must be readily accessible and located as close as possible to the area where sharps will be frequently used.
 2. Containers for sharps should be hard-sided (e.g., boxes, cans) and capable of being securely sealed to prevent spillage.
 - a. Containers for sharps contaminated with hazardous materials, human blood or OPIM must be leak-proof and have the hazard clearly noted on a label (see the disposal guidelines cited in paragraph III.A.3. above for details).
 3. Before disposal the sharps container must be securely sealed and plainly labeled (e.g., "sharps" or "broken glass").
 4. Containers of non-contaminated sharps (i.e., with no hazardous materials, human blood or OPIM) should be placed inside (not beside) dumpsters.
 5. If the sharps container contents qualify as biohazardous or hazardous waste it needs to be disposed properly through the Risk Management and Safety Office (see the guidance documents listed in III.A.3 above).