

Needlestick and Sharps Policy

SAMPLE

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Purpose

The purpose of this Needlestick and Sharps Policy is to establish a clear, consistent and legally compliant approach to the prevention, management and reporting of needlestick and sharps-related hazards, incidents and injuries at [Company Name].

This policy aims to:

- Prevent exposure to blood and body substances through sharps injuries.
- Minimise the risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses (BBVs), including Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.
- Provide clear procedures for safe handling, use, transport and disposal of sharps.
- Ensure prompt and appropriate response to needlestick and sharps incidents.
- Support [Company Name] to meet its work health and safety (WHS) obligations under relevant legislation, codes of practice and standards.

This policy is particularly relevant to workers in disability and aged care services, commercial cleaning, and waste management, where contact with clinical waste, personal care items, and certain types of rubbish is common.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All workers of [Company Name], including employees, labour hire workers, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers and students.
- All workplaces controlled by [Company Name], including client homes, residential aged care facilities, disability accommodation, offices, depots, vehicles, and any off-site locations where work is undertaken.
- All activities where there is a potential for exposure to sharps, including but not limited to:
 - Personal care and clinical support in disability and aged care settings (e.g. insulin administration, wound care).
 - Cleaning tasks in bathrooms, bedrooms, communal areas, public spaces and vehicles.
 - Waste collection, sorting, compaction and disposal activities.
 - Maintenance work where discarded sharps may be concealed (e.g. gardens, bins, public toilets).

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- **Sharps:** Items that can puncture or cut the skin, including needles, syringes with needles attached, lancets, scalpels, broken glass contaminated with blood or body substances, and any other sharp object that may pose a risk of injury or infection.

- **Needlestick injury:** A specific type of sharps injury caused by a needle that accidentally punctures the skin.
- **Blood-borne viruses (BBVs):** Viruses that can be transmitted through contact with infected blood or certain body substances, including Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- **Clinical waste:** Waste generated in the course of health care or personal care activities that may pose a risk of infection, including used sharps, blood-soaked materials and contaminated items.
- **Sharps container:** A rigid, puncture-resistant, leak-proof, clearly labelled container that complies with relevant standards for the safe disposal of sharps.
- **Worker:** Any person carrying out work in any capacity for [Company Name].

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

[Company Name] will manage sharps-related risks in accordance with:

- Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations applicable in the relevant Australian jurisdiction.
- Relevant Codes of Practice, including those relating to:
 - Hazardous manual tasks.
 - Managing the work environment and facilities.
 - Infection prevention and control (where applicable).
- Australian Standards for sharps containers and clinical waste management.
- Public health guidelines on the management of occupational exposure to blood and body substances.

[Company Name] will monitor changes to WHS and public health legislation and update this policy and associated procedures as required.

Roles and Responsibilities

Officers and Senior Management

Officers and senior management of [Company Name] must exercise due diligence to ensure that the organisation complies with its WHS duties in relation to sharps risks by:

- Ensuring appropriate resources and processes are in place to eliminate or minimise sharps-related risks.
- Approving and supporting the implementation of this policy and related procedures.
- Ensuring suitable sharps containers, PPE and cleaning/waste equipment are available and maintained.

- Ensuring systems are in place for incident reporting, investigation and follow-up.
- Monitoring WHS performance indicators related to sharps incidents.

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for implementing this policy in their areas of control by:

- Identifying tasks and locations where sharps hazards may be present (e.g. client homes, public toilets, bin rooms, waste sorting areas).
- Ensuring risk assessments are completed, documented and reviewed regularly.
- Ensuring workers receive appropriate induction, training and supervision on sharps safety.
- Ensuring sharps containers and other control measures are available, correctly positioned, and not overfilled.
- Responding promptly to reported sharps hazards and incidents.
- Supporting injured workers including facilitating medical assessment and follow-up.

Workers

All workers of [Company Name] must:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
- Follow this policy, associated procedures, training and reasonable instructions regarding sharps safety.
- Use provided PPE and equipment correctly.
- Never recap, bend or break needles or other sharps.
- Never place sharps in general waste, recycling bins or unsecured containers.
- Report hazards, unsafe conditions and all sharps incidents (including near misses) as soon as practicable.
- Participate in training, consultation and health monitoring where required.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) (where applicable)

HSRs will:

- Represent workers in WHS matters related to sharps and needlestick risks.
- Participate in risk assessments, incident investigations and policy reviews where requested.
- Assist in promoting safe sharps practices among workers.