

Sharps Disposal Procedure

SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

Purpose

The purpose of this Sharps Disposal Procedure is to provide clear, practical guidance for the safe handling, containment, transport and disposal of sharps in order to:

- Prevent needlestick and sharps injuries to workers, clients, visitors and contractors.
- Minimise the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens (e.g. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV).
- Comply with relevant Australian work health and safety (WHS) legislation, public health requirements and environmental regulations.
- Support consistent, safe practice across disability and aged care services, commercial cleaning operations and waste management activities.

This procedure applies to all workers, including employees, labour hire workers, volunteers, students and contractors who may encounter sharps while performing work for [Company Name].

Scope

This procedure covers all sharps related activities undertaken by [Company Name], including but not limited to:

- Personal care and clinical activities in disability and aged care settings (e.g. insulin injections, wound care, blood glucose monitoring).
- Collection and removal of sharps found in public or communal areas, bathrooms, gardens, vehicles, bins and waste streams during commercial cleaning work.
- Handling, transport and disposal of sharps containers and sharps waste in waste management operations, including transfer stations and depots.
- Management of accidentally discovered or illegally dumped sharps on client premises or public areas serviced by [Company Name].

This procedure does not replace specific clinical protocols or public health directives; those documents must be followed in conjunction with this procedure where applicable.

Definitions

Sharps

Items that are capable of cutting or penetrating the skin and that may be contaminated with blood or body substances. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Hypodermic needles and syringes (with or without needle attached)
- Lancets and finger-prick devices
- Scalpels and blades
- Broken glass contaminated with blood or body fluids

- Infusion sets and other sharp medical devices
- Razors used for client care

Sharps Container

A rigid, puncture-resistant, leak-proof container that is:

- Compliant with relevant Australian Standards for sharps containers
- Yellow in colour with a biohazard symbol and clear labelling
- Designed for single-use and safe closure prior to disposal

Needlestick or Sharps Injury

Any injury caused by a needle or other sharp object that penetrates the skin, whether or not blood is visible, including superficial scratches.

Worker

Any person carrying out work in any capacity for [Company Name], including employees, contractors, labour hire workers, volunteers and students.

Responsibilities

Officers and Senior Management

Officers and senior management of [Company Name] must:

- Ensure appropriate resources are provided for sharps management, including approved sharps containers, PPE, training and disposal services.
- Ensure this procedure aligns with WHS legislation, codes of practice and relevant public health and environmental requirements.
- Monitor implementation of this procedure through audits, inspections and incident reviews.
- Support consultation with workers and health and safety representatives (HSRs) on sharps-related risks and controls.

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors must:

- Implement this procedure within their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure sharps containers are available wherever sharps are reasonably likely to be generated or encountered (e.g. treatment rooms, client homes, cleaning trolleys, vehicles, waste sorting areas).
- Ensure workers receive appropriate induction, training and refresher training on sharps safety and disposal.
- Respond promptly to reports of sharps hazards, needlestick injuries or near misses.

- Ensure contractors (e.g. waste collection providers) are informed of [Company Name]'s sharps management requirements.

Workers

All workers must:

- Follow this procedure and any related safe work instructions.
- Use provided PPE and sharps containers correctly.
- Never recap, bend, break or remove needles from syringes by hand.
- Immediately report any sharps injury, exposure or unsafe condition to their supervisor.
- Participate in training and consultation processes relating to sharps safety.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

Where HSRs are in place, they should:

- Represent workers' WHS concerns relating to sharps management.
- Assist in inspections, incident investigations and risk assessments involving sharps.
- Consult with management on changes to sharps-related procedures and equipment.

Risk Management

Hazard Identification

Sharps hazards may arise in the following typical situations:

- Disability and aged care:
 - Administering injections or blood glucose tests for clients.
 - Performing wound care or podiatry services.
 - Handling client personal waste (e.g. continence aids, rubbish bins) where sharps may be discarded.
- Commercial cleaning:
 - Cleaning public toilets, car parks, stairwells and gardens where illicit drug use may occur.
 - Emptying public and office bins, skip bins and bathroom sanitary bins.
 - Cleaning staff rooms, kitchens and first aid areas where sharps may be used for legitimate medical reasons.
- Waste management:
 - Sorting and compacting general waste where sharps have been incorrectly disposed of.