



Infectious/Biological Waste

Considerable confusion often occurs over determination of infectious/biological waste and the proper methods for disposal of red bag waste.

Here are some guidelines to follow:

Types of waste:

Biological waste in Pennsylvania:

- Human blood
- Animal blood
- Sera
- Body fluids
- Cells
- Tissues
- Other related materials
- Viruses
- Bacteria
- Recombinant
- Any other materials which could post harm to humans, plants or animals via disease.

This waste falls into the category of potentially infectious and must be handled as red bag waste.

Sharps

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) defines used sharps as “sharps that have been in contact with infectious agents or that have been used in animal or human patient care or treatment, at medical, research or industrial laboratories, including blades, blood vials, needles, syringes (with or without attached needles), Pasteur pipettes, scalpel slips and other broken or unbroken glass or plastic ware.”

Note: *An easy interpretation is anything that can puncture a bag and cause injury and exposure through a cut or stick should be considered a sharp.*

Disposal

- Infectious material can be disposed directly into red bags for incineration provided there are not excessive amounts of fluids.
- Potentially infectious fluids can be poured to the drain provided it is done in a manner which protects against splashing. An additional measure of precaution recommends introducing a 1:10 dilution of bleach to the fluid prior to pouring it to the drain.
- Metallic sharps must be placed into a needle disposal container.
- The proper containment device is the plastic “sharps container”.

- When full, containers must be closed tightly and placed in the infectious/biological waste stream. Containers should not be emptied and reused.
- *Destructaclip* is popular in many laboratories. However, there is a possibility for aerosol generation when shearing the needle so, *Destructaclip* is no longer permitted by OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), thus not recommended by the University Environmental Health and Safety Department.
- For other sharps such as pipettes, Pasteur pipettes, broken glass, cover slips, test tubes and other similar items, if they do not meet the infectious criteria of the PADEP, they are acceptable for disposal as general trash and must be disposed in a glass disposal box.
Note: *If these items have come into contact with human or animal blood, cells, body fluid or derivatives, they are considered potentially infectious and must be disposed via the infectious waste stream.*

For more information contact:

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Reference:
HFMA News- February 1995