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Sharps container disposal

Posted by Anonymous on Wed, 2015-02-11 13:12

Sharps container disposal: Hi. I just want to know where we should dispose our full sharps container. Do we just have to secure the lid and make sure it's tight and sealed and then put it in the general bin or do we have to go to the nearest hospital and put it in their hazardous bins? Thank you.

Voting:



No votes yet

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Sharps container disposal

Submitted by sat on 16 February 2015

Sharps in Schools

The use of sharps is required for various science activities. The term is generally applied to specialised equipment, such as scalpel blades or needles. However, other everyday items, such as knives, drawing pins and broken glass also have the potential to cause injuries through cuts or punctures. Teachers should ensure that the safety aspects of storing, using and disposing of sharps and other such items are discussed with students prior to use. This discussion should encompass relevant first aid procedures.

Safe Sharps Disposal Containers

Sharps should be disposed of in an appropriate manner. For sharps such as scalpel blades, needles or lancets, a strong, plastic, puncture-proof container that has rigid walls^[i], with a secure lid so that it can be sealed should be used. Glass bottles or jars are not recommended for use because they can break.

Science ASSIST recommends the use of Australian Safety Standard approved sharps containers, which are specifically designed for the disposal of sharps. Different size containers are available and can be purchased from reputable science suppliers. Look for the following.

- Yellow in colour.
- Labelled as sharps or infectious waste.
- Carries the biohazard and AS/NZS symbols.

Note: sharps container should only be $\frac{3}{4}$ full prior to disposal

Disposal of Sharps Containers

The disposal of the sharps container depends upon whether or not it has infectious agents present. If it contains sharps such as drawing pins and uncontaminated broken glass or scalpel blades that have been used on non-infectious substances, then the sharps container can be firmly sealed and disposed of in the dumpster bin. It is recommended that the container is not firmly sealed until it is ready for disposal because once it is sealed, it can't be easily opened.^[ii]

If the sharps container contains sharp objects contaminated with infectious agents, or if you are unsure if the container contains infectious agents, then it should be disposed of as biohazardous waste. Sharps waste that is classified as biohazardous waste must be carefully handled and should always be:

- placed in an approved sharps disposal container;
- disposed of at a sharps collection facility or sharps disposal bin at a state health recommended facility or a facility recommended by a local council.

More information on sharps and their disposal can be found at the following websites.

Safe Work Australia National Code of Practice for the Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne) Viruses [NOHSC:2010(2003)] see Appendix B:

<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/Documen...>

Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services:

https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/109232/Safe_Sharps_Disposal_DL_Draft_1.00.pdf

Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment:

<https://education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/usedneedles-factsheet.pdf> (Link updated June 2019)

[i] Safe Work Australia.2010. National Code of Practice for the Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne) Viruses [NOHSC:2010(2003)]

[ii] Personal Communication from Ruth Kempton, Team Leader, Regional Laboratory Technicians, WA Department of Education

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