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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.

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Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Submitted by on 16 February 2015

Answer Reviewed 27 February 2023

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, gem blades, pins or needles. Schools should have systems in place to manage the risks associated with sharps. Teachers should ensure that the safety aspects of storage, use and disposal of sharps and other such items are discussed with students prior to use. This discussion should encompass relevant first aid procedures.

Sharps Containers

Sharps should be disposed of in an appropriate manner. Sharps such as scalpel blades should be placed into a strong, plastic, puncture-proof container with rigid walls, that can be securely sealed with a lid¹. Once sealed then these containers can be disposed of in the school dumpster or skip bin. Glass bottles or jars are not recommended for use because they can shatter if dropped. It is important that personnel such as staff, students or cleaners are not unknowingly exposed to the risks of injury from used sharps.

Australian Safety Standard approved sharps containers

Australian Safety Standard approved sharps containers, 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.

We recommend that you purchase your approved sharps container and **remove or cover the biohazard symbol**. Relabel as “Laboratory Sharps Container” and instruct teachers and students that only sharps such as scalpel blades, gem blades, pins or needles can be placed in the container. This is to prevent someone accidentally putting any infectious material, for example a used needle or epi pen in it.

The container is generally stored in the preparation room.

Australian Safety Standard approved sharps containers labelled with the biohazard symbol should only be available at Administration or with the school nurse. Note: sharps container should only be $\frac{3}{4}$ full prior to disposal

Disposal of Sharps Containers

Once the sharps container is $\frac{3}{4}$ full, seal the container and as it does not contain any infectious material dispose of it in the school dumpster or skip 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. Also, note that the removal of the biohazard symbol from the container should allay any concerns about improper disposal of biohazard waste.

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, a sharps disposal bin at a state health recommended facility, a local pharmacy or doctors surgery or a facility recommended by a local council.

References

1 National Occupational Health and Safety Commission. (2003) *National Code of Practice for the Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne) Viruses [NOHSC:2010(2003)]* see Appendix B: *Principles of the Storage, Transport and Disposal of Clinical Waste* Retrieved from the WorkSafe WA website: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/national-code-practice-contr...>

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