



Infectious Waste Disposal & Transport

Infectious waste is defined as physically dangerous medical or biological waste, such as:

- Sharps (e.g. lancets, needles, syringes, etc.),
- Blood and blood products,
- Pathological wastes,
- Cultures and stocks of infectious agents and associated biologicals, and
- Contaminated animal carcasses, body parts, and bedding.

Infectious waste is not a regulated hazardous waste; it is classified as a special waste under the solid waste regulations.

How is infectious waste regulated in Massachusetts?

Management and disposal of infectious waste is regulated by the:

- Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH):
[105 CMR 480.00: State Sanitary Code Title VIII](#)
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP):
[310 CMR 19.000: Solid Waste Management Regulations](#)

Transportation of infectious waste is regulated by local Boards of Health, the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

How should infectious waste from home health care be managed?

For disposal of medical sharps such as needles, syringes, and lancets, check with your local health board of department to see if it has a collection program. If no sharps collection program is available, purchase a postage-paid mail-back container to have your sharps disposed through a medical waste incinerator. [Learn more from DPH.](#)

How should infectious waste be managed at medical facilities?

Infectious waste may be disinfected or incinerated at the site where it is generated, or shipped to another site for treatment or disposal. The regulations specify requirements for treatment, labeling, and packaging before infectious waste may be transported.

What do medical facilities need to do for infectious waste to be acceptable for disposal?

To be disposed at a sanitary landfill or municipal waste combustor:

- Solid waste regulations require that all infectious waste must be treated (i.e. disinfected or autoclaved) to make it non-infectious and then be labeled as non-infectious.
- Sharps must be ground up or otherwise have their physical hazard eliminated.
- All waste must be labeled with the generator's name, address and telephone number.

To be disposed at an infectious waste incinerator:

- All waste must be placed in rigid, leak-resistant containers and labeled with the generator's name, address, and telephone number.
- Untreated waste must be labeled with the international biohazard symbol and travel with an infectious waste manifest.

Any improper disposal activities should be reported to local officials, the Environmental Strike Force at 617-556-1000, and DPH at 617-624-5757.

What are the transportation requirements for infectious waste?

Once infectious waste has been treated (i.e. disinfected or autoclaved) or packaged and labeled for shipment, its dangerous characteristics have been limited and it can be considered a solid waste for transportation and disposal purposes.

- [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 111, Section 31A](#), requires local Boards of Health to permit waste haulers. Because specific requirements for transporting waste vary depending on local ordinances, contact the Board of Health to identify special requirements for each community in which the transporter picks up infectious waste.
- [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 159B](#) requires transporters of infectious waste to obtain operating authority from the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy. Each vehicle must show a decal on its front bumper. To learn more, call 617-305-3559.

Other Important Notes

If your facility is on a septic system, call MassDEP at 617-292-5503 for information about holding tanks and containers. To report a spill of oil or hazardous material, call the 24-hour MassDEP Emergency Response Line at 888-304-1133.