



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ONE WINTER STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108 617-292-5500

MITT ROMNEY
Governor

KERRY HEALEY
Lieutenant Governor

ELLEN ROY HERZFELDER
Secretary

ROBERT W. GOLLEDGE, Jr.
Commissioner

**Policy for the Management of Sharps
Generated From Non-Commercial Sources**

Bureau of Waste Prevention

James C. Colman

James C. Colman, Assistant Commissioner

3/22/05
Date

Purpose: The subject of this policy is spent sharps (hypodermic needles and lancets) generated by non-commercial sources, such as in-home medical use, farm use, and discarded sharps collected by public health and public safety personnel during their normal work activities. The purpose of this policy is to provide a management approach for sharps that provides sufficient flexibility from the requirements of 310 CMR 16.06 (Site Assignment Regulations) and 19.015 (Solid Waste Facility Regulations) to facilitate the safe collection and disposal of sharps generated by small volume, non-commercial sharps users, specifically, residential users, public health personnel and public safety personnel (“Sharps Users”).

Applicability: This policy applies to locations identified as points of collection for sharps generated by Sharps Users and is limited to pharmacies, medical facilities and municipal facilities that choose to participate. Pharmacies, medical facilities and municipal facilities may not collect sharps generated offsite by Sharps Users except in accordance with this policy. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the participating pharmacy, medical facility or municipal facility being considered a solid waste facility subject to all provisions of 310 CMR 16.00 and 19.000.

Background: Spent sharps generated from in-home medical use, such as the treatment of diabetes, and discarded sharps collected by public health and public safety personnel during their normal work activities, can pose significant problems when disposed in municipal solid waste. The in-home user generally disposes of sharps by placing them in a rigid plastic container and then discarding the container in the solid waste stream where, as a result of compaction and other

transportation-related activities, the containers may rupture, causing the needles to become loosely dispersed throughout the waste stream. Uncontained sharps can pose health and safety risks to personnel employed at solid waste facilities, who can receive inadvertent puncture wounds when inspecting bags for banned wastes or removing recyclables from the waste stream. Public health and public safety personnel often find spent sharps that have been illegally discarded and collect these discards in an effort to protect the public from accidental exposure to blood borne pathogens. These personnel often have difficulty lawfully disposing of sharps because of the limited number of collection locations.

Pilot Project: In September 2002, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a sharps management guidance document entitled “Interim Guidance for a Pilot Program for the Management of Sharps Generated From Certain Non-Commercial Sources,” that set the stage for piloting non-commercial sharps collection programs. In May 2003, three collection sites - two pharmacies and one senior citizen center - were established in the city of Haverhill under the “Eureka! Sharps Disposal Program.” The Eureka program was created as a partnership between the Diabetes Foundation of Rhode Island, Stericycle Inc., and several Rhode Island companies. The Eureka! program underwrites collection and disposal costs, and provides participating sites with specially designed, locked kiosks that feature one-way doors through which used needles can be deposited, thereby substantially reducing potential blood-borne pathogen exposure. The kiosk design meets applicable U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards. During the first 12 months of operation in Haverhill, a total of 475 pounds of sharps (equivalent to 52,217 needles) were collected and disposed of by these three sites.

During this time, the Franklin County Solid Waste District also established a successful collection program consisting of eight municipal office sites and two physicians’ office sites where residents could pick up specially designed sharps containers and return them full for disposal. The collection sites tracked the number of issued and returned sharps containers and the District coordinated and underwrote collection and disposal costs. Stericycle collected and disposed the sharps containers on a regular schedule. The County continues to operate this program.

There were no reports of pathogen exposure to participants in either of these pilots.

At this time, DEP believes that the collection and disposal of used sharps can be safely managed within the requirements of this guidance document and that its implementation statewide would serve to protect public health and safety, and the health and safety of workers at solid waste management facilities, and would further the goals of safe waste management. Therefore, DEP is issuing the following policy.

Policy: DEP will allow certain locations, known as Sharps Collection Centers, to be points of collection for used sharps from Sharps Users. A Sharps Collection Center may be a pharmacy, medical facility or municipal facility. A Sharps User may bring his or her sharps, in containers that are leak proof, rigid, puncture resistant and shatterproof, to a Sharps Collection Center that has chosen to participate, and deposit the sharps in a Collection Container specially designed to receive and transport them. As soon as the spent sharps are placed into the Collection Container

at the participating location, they have been discarded and become a regulated solid waste. The point of generation of this waste is the Sharps Collection Center.

In order to be a Sharps Collection Center and be eligible to participate in this program, the participant must:

- have the approval of the local Board of Health;
- use only Collection Containers that meet the requirements of the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Federal Department of Transportation and are marked with the international biohazard symbol;
- ensure that if kiosks are used, they meet the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards;
- ensure that the Collection Containers are onsite, secure and accessible;
- accept sharps from Sharps Users that are in leak proof, rigid, puncture resistant and shatterproof containers;
- provide appropriate transfer containers for Sharps Users who fail to bring their sharps in such containers prior to placement in the Collection Container;
- have a written agreement with a medical waste transporter providing for regularly scheduled waste pickups;
- store, handle, transport and treat the collected waste in accordance with the Department of Public Health Regulations, 105 CMR 480.000: Storage and Disposal of Infectious and Physically Dangerous Medical or Biological Waste; and
- notify DEP (Attn: Waste Branch Chief, Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Waste Prevention, Business Compliance Division, Boston, MA 02108) by providing the name, address and telephone number of the Sharps Collection Center on the form attached to this policy.

Additional Information: Further information regarding the proper management of sharps generated by Sharps Users may be found at the following website:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical/sharps.htm>