

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Sharps & Other Waste

It is not uncommon during a safety inspection to come across containers of used needles, syringes or sharps. People understand that these items need some type of special disposal attention, other than just tossing into the regular trash can, but are not sure exactly what to do with them next. A wise man once told me, that the answer to most safety related questions is, “that depends”. So the following are some “that depends” questions to ask yourself when deciding on how to properly dispose of items.

Is it a sharp?

Sharps are defined as any device having corners, edges, or projections capable of cutting or piercing the skin. Sharps can include needles, needles with syringes, needles from vacutainers, needles with attached tubing, blades (razors, scalpels, X-acto, etc.), broken glassware, glassware with sharp edges or points, Pasteur pipettes, and glass microscope slides.

Is it a medical waste?

Medical waste is defined as all waste generated in direct patient care (includes animals) or in diagnostic or research areas that is non-infectious but aesthetically repugnant if found in the environment.

Is it an infectious/biohazardous waste?

An infectious waste is any solid or liquid which may contain pathogens with sufficient virulence such that exposure can result in an infectious disease. Waste contaminated with blood and other bodily fluids, cultures and stocks of infectious agents from laboratory work (e.g. waste from autopsies and infected animals from laboratories), or waste from patients/animals with infections.

Is it a regulated waste?

A regulated waste is contaminated with a hazardous substance, such as RCRA chemical or biologic or radioactive.

Sources:

<https://www.biosafety.msstate.edu/biosafety/wastedisposal/>
<http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/index.cfm/30,116,83.pdf/licensureinfecreg.pdf>
<https://www.biosafety.msstate.edu/files/sharps.pdf>

If you have a sharp, it must be contained as to not become hazardous (cut/stuck by) to you or anybody else; this means placed in a puncture-resistant container or “broken glass” box.

If the sharp is not contaminated with a regulated or infectious material, then this puncture-resistant container can be any color except red and should be labeled “NON-HAZARDOUS SHARPS WASTE”. Tape container up good, so it cannot accidentally come open, and place in the dumpster.

Medical waste, infectious or not, shall be contained in a manner and location which affords protection from animals, rain and wind, does not provide a breeding place or a food source for insects and rodents, and minimizes exposure to the public.

When not a sharp nor infectious, medical waste can be bagged, placed inside a taped box (neither being red), and both labeled “NON-HAZARDOUS WASTE” before placing in dumpster.

Infectious/biohazardous waste must be decontaminated before disposal. This is accomplished in a variety of ways such as autoclaving, chemical disinfection, or other methods based on a risk assessment. If decontamination is not possible, contact MSU EH&S for assistance or an infectious waste contract service may be an option.

Regulated waste can never be placed into the regular trash or dumpster. Along with RCRA chemicals or radioactive items, this also includes batteries, pesticides, mercury-containing equipment, oil-based paints, thinners, and solvents.

So some items can be throw away with a little preparation, but others may still need to be picked up by MSU Hazardous Waste. Always ask first if unsure about proper disposal.

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