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Municipal workers are often assigned the task of picking up the garbage that gets dumped along the side of the road, in ditches and at dead end streets.

What do you do if you don't know what's in that bag or barrel?



Every municipality should have a documented procedure that identifies the steps to follow to handle these items, safely.

Staff will need to conduct an in-field risk assessment, and then establish procedures to protect themselves from the identified, or unknown, hazards, which could include:

Dangerous reactions – incompatible substances may be mixed during handling and disposal, possibly creating a dangerous and violent reaction.

Inhalation of Vapours or Particles – certain chemicals, moulds and asbestos can generate

vapours or particles which may be harmful if inhaled. Even discarded drywall could contain asbestos in any residual mudding compound.

Punctures – contact with sharps could result in exposure to a variety of biological hazards.

Explosion of pressurized containers – damaged and corroded propane tanks, paint cans, etc. can rupture during handling and disposal.

Splash contact – exposure to hazardous liquid material is often possible through the skin and mucous membranes of the eyes and nose.

SAFE COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Before handling any waste which may contain hazardous materials, always review any established procedures. Site specific procedures may need to be developed, depending on the circumstances.

It may be necessary to leave the materials on-site until the appropriate precautionary measures, collection and disposal procedures have been established, which may include calling a HazMat team.

The following tips are general precautions.

Do an in-field risk assessment to determine all potential hazards in the area, including the presence of homeless individuals, unstable structures, discarded needles, chemical containers, rodent infestations, etc.

Wherever possible, limit contact with the material by collecting and loading it with a backhoe or loader.

OCTOBER *Safety Talk*

Topic: What's in that abandoned waste?

If necessary to lift manually, perform a test lift to make sure the objects can be safely lifted manually and that the container will not fail during handling.

Transport and dispose of the collected abandoned waste in a suitable location which limits the need for additional manual handling, in compliance with disposal regulations.



NEVER:

- Open waste containers or bags to inspect the contents as this could result in an exposure situation.
- Place your hands underneath the waste material as this increases risk of puncture injury.
- Use your hands to collect discarded material – use shovels, garbage pickers, pitchforks, etc.