

## Topic: Sharps Disposal

The term “sharp” includes anything that might produce a puncture wound that exposes an employee to blood or other potentially infectious material. This can include such items as broken glass, knives or hypodermic needles.



As many as one-third of all sharps injuries have been estimated to be related to the sharps disposal process. These injuries have most often been related to a number of factors, including inappropriate sharps disposal practices by the user, inadequate sharps disposal container design, inappropriate sharps disposal container placement, and overfilling of sharps disposal containers.

When possible, engineering controls should be put in place to reduce the risk of exposure. An example of engineering controls would be the use of a litter picking device to pick up garbage or remove a blockage from a pipe and the use of a bio-hazardous container to transport sharps for disposal.

Assume all sharps may be infectious. There is no way of knowing by observation what a sharp may be infected with.

Needles and other potentially infectious materials are often found on roadways, in public washrooms, in regular garbage, parks, alleys, vacant lots, and on beaches.

Don't reach into any area without first protecting yourself; use a device such as tongs, a litter picker or pliers to access the area.

### What to do if you find a sharp:

- ✓ Use gloves, tongs and a sharps storage device.
- ✓ Don't move the needle without using the appropriate PPE.
- ✓ Bring the kit to the area where the needle was found and put on gloves.
- ✓ Ensure the sharps container is open and on the ground beside the needle.  
DO NOT HOLD THE CONTAINER WHILE DISPOSING THE NEEDLE.
- ✓ Use the tongs/pliers to pick up the needle.
- ✓ Place the needle in the open container.
- ✓ Close the container.
- ✓ Take one glove off and put it in the hand that is still gloved. Pull the remaining glove off at the opening so it is inside out with the other glove inside it. Wash your hands with a disinfectant.



- ✓ Dispose of the whole sharps container as instructed by your employer.

### What to do if an exposure incident occurs:

- ✓ Flush area if exposed in eyes, mouth or nose area.
- ✓ If you have a puncture allow the wound to bleed freely, then wash with soap and water.
- ✓ Report the incident immediately but do not delay in seeking medical attention.
- ✓ Seek medical attention immediately, preferably within 2 hours of the exposure.
- ✓ Take the sharp with you, in a secure container.
- ✓ Follow physician recommendations.
- ✓ Report the exposure on your employers incident report form.

