

Loss Prevention News

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Provided by the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool

Proper Disposal of Home Health Care Supplies

Public entity employees are exposed to medical items such as syringes, needles and lancets. Sanitation, parks, police, EMS and fire department employees have a higher concern for exposure to these items, but all employees are at risk. Medical sharps will cause injury and possible exposure to communicable disease, which requires testing for an extended period. The risks can be reduced. Employees should take necessary precautions such as wearing gloves and following proper waste handling procedures.



One city provided information in a flyer included with utility bills that requested proper disposal of home health care items. Language adapted from the city's article follows:

The City of _____ Needs Your Help Proper Disposal of Home Health Care Supplies

Puncture wounds from needles tossed into a garbage bag or flushed down a toilet cause stress and anxiety for City employees. Needle sticks require medical treatment and testing for communicable diseases. The City is asking for your assistance in protecting its employees from injury.

You can prevent injury and illness by following some simple steps when disposing of needles, sharp objects and contaminated home health care materials.



Place needles, lancets, syringes and other sharp objects in a hard plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tightly secured lid. Many containers such as coffee cans, plastic milk jugs or soda bottles can be used. Containers specifically designed for disposing medical waste sharps can also be purchased. Before discarding a container, be sure to reinforce the lid with heavy-duty tape.

Do not use glass containers when discarding needles or other sharp objects.

Containers with medical waste, syringes or sharps should not be mixed with materials to be recycled. Those containers should be placed in regular household trash. **Medical waste is not recyclable.**

Soiled bandages, disposable sheets and medical gloves should be placed in securely fastened plastic bags. For additional security, place containers of syringes or medical waste sharps inside a plastic bag with regular garbage and make sure the bag is securely tied before placing it out for collection.

By following these steps you can help protect workers and others from possible injury.

For additional information contact the Solid Waste (Public Works) Department at _____.

Cities may enact ordinances to require proper disposal of medical sharps and a maximum gross weight (such as 50 pounds) for any garbage receptacle. Your entity's legal advisor can provide more information on such ordinances. Communicate with citizens in a positive manner, and your entity can reduce the risk of employee injury.

Resources

TML-IRP Loss Prevention Department
800-537-6655 www.tmlirp.org
Media Library Videos on Sanitation Safety include —#480
(DVD), and #596, 164, 167, 775 (VHS)
Sample Safety Program