

Guidelines for safe handling and disposal of sharps

I. Purpose

- A. To minimize bodily injury, illness, and loss of work caused by improper handling or disposal of sharps (needles, blades, pipettes & tips, broken glass & ceramics, cut metal & shavings, etc.) can cause bodily injury, illness, and loss of work.

II. Definitions

- A. Sharps (OSHA): Sharps are objects that can penetrate a worker's skin, such as needles, scalpels, broken glass, capillary tubes, plastic pipet tips, pipets and the exposed ends of dental wires.

III. Guidelines for safe handling and disposal of sharps

- A. Sharps should be handled using proper equipment and technique:
 - 1. Sharps should not be touched by bare hands. Protective clothing, such as leather or cut-resistant gloves and shoes without exposed toes, must be worn.
 - 2. When possible, mechanical means (such as a brush and dust pan, tongs, or forceps) should be used.
 - 3. If the sharps are contaminated with hazardous materials, or with human blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM, as defined in the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens standard [29 CFR 1910.1030]), consult the UW Safety [Hazardous Materials Spill Emergency Response Plan](#) or the [Biohazardous Waste Disposal](#) guidelines (see www.uwyo.edu/safety/).
- B. Sharps need to be disposed into proper containers, NOT in bags, recycling or trash cans.
 - 1. Sharps disposal containers must be readily accessible and located as close as possible to the area where sharps will be frequently used.
 - 2. Containers for sharps should be hard-sided (e.g., boxes, cans) and capable of being securely sealed to prevent spillage.
 - a. Containers for sharps contaminated with hazardous materials, human blood or OPIM must be leak-proof and have the hazard clearly noted on a label (see the disposal guidelines cited in paragraph III.A.3. above for details).
 - 3. Before disposal the sharps container must be securely sealed and plainly labeled (e.g., "sharps" or "broken glass").
 - 4. Containers of non-contaminated sharps (i.e., with no hazardous materials, human blood or OPIM) should be placed inside (not beside) dumpsters.
 - 5. If the sharps container contents qualify as biohazardous or hazardous waste it needs to be disposed properly through the University of Wyoming Safety.