

# Biohazard Sharps Disposal

USC

*EH&S Fact Sheet  
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ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH & SAFETY

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## What Are Biohazard Sharps?

Various forms of waste are defined as biohazardous because of the actual or presumed presence of pathogenic microorganisms. Biological waste and blood fall into this category and are therefore biohazardous.

Objects which have been used in invasive procedures such as hypodermic needles and broken glass items contaminated with blood or other biohazardous waste are considered to be biohazard sharps waste. Sharps include, but are not limited to, all hypodermic and suture needles, intravenous blood collection devices, phlebotomy devices, scalpels, pasteur pipettes, and razor blades.

## Proper Disposal of Biohazard Sharps

All sharps contaminated with biohazardous materials must be disposed of in a rigid puncture-resistant container that, when sealed, is leak resistant and cannot be reopened without great difficulty. In addition, the container must be labeled with an *International Biohazard Symbol* on the lid and on the sides so as to be visible from any lateral direction.

**Sharps must be placed directly into the containers and NEEDLES MUST NOT BE RECAPPED, BENT, BROKEN, OR REMOVED FROM DISPOSABLE SYRINGES.**

Once containers are filled, they must be disposed of by Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) and **NOT PLACED WITH REGULAR TRASH.**

## Policy Change: Disposal of Plastic Pipette Tips

Beginning March 1, 2008, all plastic pipette tips intended for disposal that are contaminated with biological material must now be placed into a dry biohazard container lined with a red biohazard bag. Tips contaminated with chemical or radioactive material may be disposed into an appropriate, labeled waste container, e.g. thick Ziploc<sup>®</sup> bag or plastic container with lid (not a sharps container).

Do not place ANY pipette tips into the regular trash, as they can puncture the thin trash bags when handled by custodians. Pipette tips, plastic items which have a sharp point, or clean glass which are not contaminated with any of the hazardous materials may be disposed into a cardboard box with a lid and lined with plastic. Custodians will dispose of the cardboard box when full. Boxes are available for purchase with any lab product supplier.

Please inform your staff and coworkers of this change in waste procedures. This change was initiated in response to researcher requests to ease space and procedural burdens, and in the interest of sustainability and compliance. Regulatory compliance has been confirmed.

Anyone on campus can schedule a waste pickup from the EH&S web page at: <http://capsnet.usc.edu/ehs/>.

## Obtaining Sharps Containers

Employees and students who use sharps in their work can obtain proper procedures for handling sharps and sharps containers from EH&S. Sharps containers are provided by EH&S upon request.

## Hypodermic Needles on Campus

Resident students or staff who regularly use hypodermic needles for medical care can obtain sharps containers and proper procedures for handling sharps from the USC Community Pharmacy. When these containers are full, they must be returned to the Pharmacy for proper disposal and new containers will be issued.

When a hypodermic needle (*improperly disposed*) is found on campus, notify EHS for proper disposal. After hours call DPS at ext. 0-6000.

**EH&S Fact Sheets are intended for facilitating safety discussions in your department. Post the monthly topic on your departmental bulletin board.**