Tufts Environmental Health and Safety

Biosafety Program

**Disposal of “Sharp” Medical and Biological Waste from Laboratories at Tufts University**

Medical and Biological Wastes (aka Biohazardous wastes) in Massachusetts are regulated by the MA Departments of Public Health and Environmental Protection.

“Sharps” are defined as any discarded article that can cause skin punctures or cuts.

Articles include:

Needles, syringes, Pasteur pipettes, broken glassware contaminated with infectious/biohazardous agents, disposable scalpels, scalpel blades, razor blades, dissecting needles, scissors, dental or any sharp wire.

Any device with a sharp edge that could cause a skin cut or a sharp point that can cause a skin puncture is a sharp.

All sharps must be placed in an approved sharps container provided by Tufts EHS. These are red reusable containers supplied by Stericycle. In Boston, these containers are collected every Wed. by Triumvirate staff and transported to a central storage area for offsite transportation and treatment. In Medford and Grafton, the users of the sharps containers receive location specific training on how and where these containers are collected.

NOTE: A sharp does NOT have to be contaminated with a hazardous biological agent to be considered a sharp. Uncontaminated clean sharps must be also be disposed of as medical waste.

Additional sharps: Plastic or glass volumetric pipettes, glass microscope slides or cover slips, haemocytometers.

NOTE: Do not overfill sharps containers- no articles should protrude from the opening of the container in ANY way. If there are, the container will not be collected.

Plastic pipette tips in general will not easily puncture human skin however they will puncture plastic waste bags resulting in leakage or failure of the medical waste bag. Hence plastic pipette tips should be placed in the sharps container.
What about glass equipment or supplies that is NOT broken?

A white cardboard box labeled GLASS DO NOT EMPTY can be requested from Tufts EHS.(call EHS Office on your campus) This box should be used for the collection and when filled the disposal of any uncontaminated broken or intact glass. When filled, these boxes should be closed and sealed tight with tape by the laboratory staff and disposed of with solid waste. These sealed boxes are collected by ABM personnel.

Note: There are 3 sizes of Glass disposal boxes-small (benchtop), medium and large (floor).

Solid medical and biological wastes that are NOT sharps must be placed in a medical waste bag inside a rigid labeled container until placed in an autoclave for treatment. Do not place solid medical and biological wastes that are NOT sharps in sharps container!

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