



COUNTY OF ORANGE

INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

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Disposal Procedures for Household Generated “Sharps” Waste

The California Medical Waste Management Act (MWMA), which can be found in the California Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Division 104, Part 14, Section 117600—118360, provides regulatory requirements for the proper permitting, handling, storage, transportation, and disposal of medical waste. In Orange County, the Health Care Agency/Environmental Health Division (HCA) implements the MWMA and thus serves as the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) for medical waste.

The MWMA (H&SC section 117755) defines “Sharps Waste” as any device having acute rigid corners, edges, or protuberances capable of cutting or piercing (i.e. hypodermic needles, hypodermic needles with syringes, blades, needles with attached tubing, broken glass contaminated with biohazardous waste, etc.). However, “Sharps Waste” generated from a home is considered household medical waste, and exempt from MWMA regulations (H&SC section 117700).

Since household generated “Sharps Waste” is exempt from regulations and therefore, may be discarded into the regular trash, there is a safety concern to protect all individuals that may come in contact with this waste, as well as the health and safety of the general public. The Integrated Waste Management Department (IWMD) and the LEA recommends the following guidelines be followed:

1. “Sharps Waste” is to be placed in a rigid, leak-proof container with a secure lid (i.e., plastic bleach or laundry detergent containers, etc., **not** soda bottles or milk jugs).
2. Prior to disposal, when the container is full, disinfect the contents by adding a small amount of 10% bleach solution to the container. Tightly seal the lid and shake the container to ensure contact of bleach with the contents.
3. Pour the bleach into your sewer drain (i.e., kitchen/bathroom sink, toilet)
4. It is recommended that you solidify the contents with a mixture of plaster of paris, mortar, cement, or some other material (this procedure is optional).
5. Tightly close the lid and tape the lid to the container to prevent accidental opening and release.
6. Label the container “Home Generated Sharps Waste”.
7. Dispose into the regular trash (**not** the recycle bin) insuring limited accessibility by the general public.

Note: Red “Sharps” containers, similar to those used by medical facilities, may now be purchased by the general public from some pharmacies, as well as, products that clip the needles from the plungers and contain only the needles, while the plungers can go to the trash; and systems that sterilize and solidify the needles in a special container prior to disposal into the trash.

As an option to disposal into the trash, the Medical Waste section of the HCA maintains a limited list of medical facilities willing to accept home generated sharps from the general public for proper disposal. You may contact the Medical Waste section of the HCA at (714) 433-6000 with questions pertaining to home generated sharps waste handling and disposal.

Should you have questions relating to the disposal requirements of medical waste at Orange County landfills, please contact a Materials Regulation Specialist with IWMD at (714) 834-4000.