

BIOMEDICAL WASTE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PLEASE REFER TO THE USF BIOMEDICAL WASTE PLAN OR CONTACT EH&S FOR MORE INFORMATION

1) We have a sharps container in our lab that we rarely use. Is there a time limit for how long it can stay?

No. As long as the container is used for sharps only, it can remain in use until it reaches the designated fill line. If a non-sharp item (i.e. bandaid) is discarded in the container, then the container must be removed within 30 days regardless of the amount.

2) Can I use any kind of red bag?

No. Regulatory agencies require that red bags used for biomedical waste meet the following specifications:

- ASTM D-1709-91: Impact resistance of 165 grams
- ASTM D-1922-89: Tearing resistance of 480 grams in both the parallel and perpendicular planes with respect to the length of the bag
- Incidental sum concentrations of lead, mercury, hexavalent chromium and cadmium shall be no greater than 100 ppm for dyes used in the coloration of bags

This is usually printed on the bag; if not, simply call the supplier and request proof that bags have passed these tests.

You are required to have proof of red bag specifications in the lab.

3) Is broken glass considered a sharp? Should it be disposed of in a red sharps container?

The definition of a sharp is anything that can puncture or lacerate the skin; however, it must be an item contaminated with an infectious material before it has to be treated as biomedical waste. For example, a broken beaker used only with chemicals can go into the broken glass container. On the other hand, a broken vial containing blood would go into a red sharps container as it is contaminated with blood.

4) What do I do if I have a biomedical waste spill?

1. Determine appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which may include but is not limited to eye protection, gowns, lab coats and masks. **Gloves are mandatory regardless of the nature of the spill.**
2. Clean surface with solution of industrial strength detergent to remove visible soil. In the case of broken glass or needles, take extreme care to prevent percutaneous injury. In the event of larger liquid spills, use a solidifier such as vermiculite.
3. Decontaminate the surface using an EPA-registered disinfectant. Follow instructions regarding contact time before drying. Household bleach diluted 1:10 with water is sufficient, and must remain wet for at least 10 minutes.
4. Dispose of waste in appropriate biomedical waste container
5. Wash your hands

5) What do I do with a red bag once it is full?

Seal the bag by using a single tie knot, tape, or zip tie (so that nothing will leak if the bag is inverted) and label the outside of the bag with the contact name, address, and phone number. Dispose of the bag in a designated disposal bin.

* Red bag waste cannot be stored for more than 30 days, and this begins when the first item is discarded.