

SAFE USE OF SHARPS & DISPOSAL PROCEDURE

Sharps are items that can easily puncture the skin. Examples include needles, razor blades, and broken glass. All sharps must be handled and disposed in a manner that protects you and others from exposure and possible injury. This procedure applies to the handling and disposal of sharps and must be followed to:

1. Prevent personal injury
2. Prevent contamination of personnel or the environment.
3. Ensure proper containment of laboratory and infectious waste during collection, transfer, and disposal.

General Precautions

- Substitute glassware for plastic-ware whenever possible. Routinely inspect glassware and remove from service items that are damaged, starred, cracked, or chipped.
- Make sure lighting is adequate and the work space is not crowded for the task at hand.
- Be alert at all times when handling sharps. Don't look away or become otherwise distracted while handling a sharp object.
- Select rounded or blunt end devices when practicable.
- Use cut-resistant gloves if practicable. In some cases, heavy rubber gloves (i.e., glassware washing) or double gloving (when manual dexterity is important) may be appropriate.
- Do not handle sharp objects (i.e., broken glass) with bare hands. Use mechanical devices.
- Do not leave unprotected sharps (i.e., razor blades, scalpel tips, etc.) on bench tops or loose in drawers. Use protective shields, cases, Styrofoam blocks, tube holders, etc.
- Protect the sharp when passing from one person to another. If not feasible, use verbal communication when passing.
- Use needle syringes only when absolutely necessary. If a needle syringe is absolutely necessary to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically resheathes the needle.
- Do not try to recap the needle of a syringe. An accidental puncture might occur.
- Used needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated by hand before disposal.
- Keep a sharps disposal container immediately accessible. Read the authorized sharps container manufacturer's instructions and recommended user training information prior to use.
- Broken glass must be discarded into a plastic-lined container with the label "Broken Glass", unless it is contaminated with biological materials. Broken glass contaminated with biological materials must be discarded in a red sharps disposal container.

Precautions for the Disposal of Sharps

- Ensure that appropriate sharps disposal containers are available in the immediate work area: The sharps disposal container must be labeled with a biohazard symbol. Sharps disposal containers must be rigid, leak and puncture proof, and sealable.
- Needles and needle-syringe units, whether infectious or not, must be placed in the sharps disposal container.
- Sharps disposal containers storing needles and syringes contaminated with biological materials **cannot** be placed in the normal trash.
- Sharps disposal container must not be overfilled. This hazard should be reported to the lab manager or PI immediately upon notice. If the sharps container is overfilled, obtain a new container and use forceps or tongs to remove protruding devices and place them in the new container. Make sure the sharps container being used is large enough to accommodate the entire device. Notify EH&S for assistance in removing the hazard, if necessary.
- Do not try to retrieve items from sharps disposal containers.
- Never force materials into a sharps container.
- Safety hazards identified with the sharps disposal container, i.e. needles protruding from the container, needles not freely falling into the container, must be immediately reported to the lab manager or PI.

For additional information or assistance with handling or disposing of sharps, please contact the Division of Environmental Health & Safety at 813-974-4036