

Sierra County Human Services

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A Guide to Syringe (Sharps) Disposal



Disposing of Your Syringes (Home-Generated Sharps)

It is now illegal (as of September 1, 2008) to dispose of syringes (sharps) in the trash, or recycling bin, or composting bins. All needles should be treated as if they carry a disease. That means that if someone gets stuck with a needle, they could get infected with a disease that may be on the needle. Therefore, they would have to get extensive medical tests and worry about whether they have caught a harmful or deadly disease. You have the power to prevent a situation like this simply by safely disposing of your used sharps. Do not place others at risk when safe alternatives are currently available.

Why Are Needles Dangerous?

They can injure people; can spread germs (hepatitis and HIV/AIDS); damage recycling equipment; and require people to be tested for years for HIV and hepatitis, if they are stuck.

To avoid needle sticks at home and protect garbage and recycling workers, don't do the following:

- **Don't** throw used needles, syringes, or lancets in the garbage.
- **Don't** put needles in recycling containers.
- **Don't** flush needles down the toilet.
- **Don't** put needles into used plastic milk jugs, bleach bottles, or soda bottles.

To properly and legally dispose of needles, do the following:

- **Do** use an approved disposal container.
- **Do** find a collection center for proper disposal.

Safe Packaging Options

The safest and recommended method to package your sharps is in an approved red sharps container. The sharps container is puncture-resistant and, once sealed, cannot spill. This container is considered full when it has been filled to three quarters of its capacity. At this point, the container should be permanently sealed and returned to a disposal location as soon as possible. At that time a new container should be obtained.

Attached is a list of mail-back services approved by the California Department of Public Health (link below):

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/medicalwaste/Documents/MedicalWaste/SharpsMailBackList.pdf>.

For further information, contact Elizabeth Morgan, Sierra County Environmental Health at (530) 993-6716
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