



*Procedural Guidelines*  
*Sharps Handling and Disposal*

The sharps handling and disposal guideline will provide employees with the necessary steps to take when faced with the obligation to handle and dispose of contaminated and non-contaminated sharps.

Safe work practices such as proper handling and disposal will protect staff, students and others from the danger of blood-borne infectious diseases, infection, injury or exposure related to sharps injuries such as needle sticks, cuts and scratches.

**Definitions**

*Sharps*

Any object that could readily puncture or cut the skin of an individual when encountered.

*Non-Contaminated Sharps*

Non-contaminated sharps are made of a material that has a sharp edge or point. A non-contaminated sharp generally does not pose a risk of infectious diseases, however, they are still a hazard to an employee or individual if not properly handled or disposed of properly.

Examples of non-contaminated sharps includes, but are not limited to:

- Broken glass
- Metal
- Pencils / Pens
- Scissors
- Anything that could puncture a garbage bag causing the bag to rupture or spill, or risk unexpected injury and exposure to custodial employees.

*Contaminated Sharps*

Contaminated sharps require special disposal as they are considered biohazardous waste and contain a risk of passing on blood-borne pathogens if not handled or disposed of correctly.

Examples of contaminated sharps includes, but are not limited to:

- Needles
- Syringes
- Razor Blades

## **Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps**

Care should be taken to properly handle the collection and disposal of both contaminated and non-contaminated sharps. Direct handling of sharps should never be attempted without proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and tools (ie. tongs)

### *Non-Contaminated Sharps*

Non-contaminated sharps such as broken glass are to never be placed into a garbage can or recycling container without being properly secured.

- When handling or disposing of non-contaminated sharps, don heavy duty gloves that provide proper protection from cuts or puncture.
- Use a broom and dustpan to gather up all broken pieces, if appropriate.
- Place sharp contents into a sturdy cardboard box and securely seal shut, or wrap in several layers of newspaper or other protective material such as bubble wrap and place outside of the garbage can, or in the middle of the garbage bag.
- Clearly label the box (ie. "SHARP OBJECTS" / "BROKEN GLASS", etc.).

### *Contaminated Sharps*

Contaminated sharps must be disposed of in a secure sharps container and cannot be placed into regular garbage bins.

The risk of blood-borne infection can be transmitted through a contaminated sharps injury.

- Discard sharps into a sharps container at the location they are found (do not transport them).
- Do not recap needles.
- Do not bend or purpose break or remove a needle from the syringe.
- Wear gloves and use tongs when picking up and placing the sharps into a sharps container.
- Pick up sharps one at a time, with sharp end facing down
- Place into sharps container with sharp end facing down
- Wipe down any equipment used to handle sharps with disinfectant
- Wash your hands with soap and water

By ensuring the steps above are followed when handling and disposing of sharps, the risk of an individual being unknowingly injured by sharps hidden within regular garbage is greatly reduced.

*See Appendix A – How to Safely Pick Up a Discarded Needle*

## **Sharps Containers**

Sharps containers come in many various shapes and sizes. A sharps container is a dedicated container made of hard plastic that is puncture resistant, leak-proof and is usually yellow in colour. The container has a tight fitting lid, a biohazard label and is designed to be used so that a sharp can be easily disposed of.

In the event a workplace does not have a dedicated sharps container available, a hard plastic container meeting the criteria above is satisfactory (i.e. plastic jar with screw top lid). If an informal sharps container is used it must also be labeled "*BIOHAZARD / SHARPS*", taped shut, and must be kept secure in a safe area for collection.

The Plant Services Department coordinates the collection of all sharps containers, from all schools, for proper disposal

### **Unexpected Found Needles, Syringes or other Sharps on School Property**

During morning school yard checks, Custodians are to be aware to look out for any potential discarded sharps. When a sharp such as needle is found, they are to pick it up per the guidelines outlined above, place it in an appropriate sharps container and retain it in a safe location.

If a needle, syringe or other sharp is found during the day:

- Do not leave the area unattended. The area must be marked and all children / employees kept away from the area until the sharp is properly disposed of.
- Follow Universal Precautions Procedure

If found outside of school hours:

- Report to Plant Services Department at (705) 945-5640.

### **In Event of Injury Related to Exposure to Sharps**

- Remain calm
- Get first aid / medical treatment immediately
  - Allow wound to bleed freely (do not press or squeeze wound)
  - Apply a sterile, waterproof bandage
  - If injury is related to a contaminated sharp, seek advice from a medical professional
- Report incident to Principal / Supervisor

References: [Algoma Public Health Safer Sharps Handling and Disposal](#)  
[North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit Injury Prevention in Schools](#)  
[WSIB Contact with Blood and Other Bodily Fluids](#)

# HOW TO SAFELY Pick Up a Discarded Needle



## Protect Yourself

Protect your hands by using tongs or puncture resistant gloves with heavy material such as leather.



## Proper Handling

Hold the needle tip away from you.



## Safe Disposal

Put the needle into a sharps container or plastic container with lid



## Protect Others

Do not put the container into garbage or recycling bin. Ensure container is labeled and taped shut.