



Department of  
Health and Safety

# Sharps Disposal

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## 1.0 LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Memorial University has legal & legislative requirements as set out in Section 4 of the Newfoundland & Labrador Occupational Health & Safety Act to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its workers. Specific duties of the employer are set out in Section 5, sub-sections (a), (b), (c) and (d).

## 2.0 STANDARD

This standard sets Memorial University's expectation for the disposal of sharps object.

## 3.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of implementing and enacting a sharps disposal standard is to ameliorate the hazards associated with needle stick injuries and handling sharps. The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in DHHS (NIOSH) Publication 97-111, states that needle stick injuries (NSI's) are a major concern in the transmission of bloodborne pathogens, toxins, and venoms in hospital and laboratory settings. Many NSI's go unreported; therefore, the actual number of disease transmissions is unknown. The Centers for Disease Control estimates the following transmission rates: for Hepatitis B, 6% to 30% of all needle stick injuries will result in disease transmission; for Hepatitis C, 5% to 10% of all needle stick injuries will result in disease transmission; and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), 0.3% of all needle stick injuries will result in disease transmission.

Enacting this standard helps ensure that the resources for reducing risk from needle stick injuries and disposing of sharps safely are allocated without delay, thereby reducing the risk to staff, faculty, students and visitors at Memorial University.

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

**Act & Regulations:** Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health & Safety Act & Regulations, latest edition.

**CDC:** Centers for Disease Control

**NSI's:** Needle Stick Injuries

**NIOSH:** National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health

## 5.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This standard applies to all workplaces and places of employment at Memorial University and supersedes all other standards for the disposal of sharps.

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## 6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of Dean's, Directors, and Managers to ensure that this standard for sharps disposal is promulgated to faculty and staff and to ensure that faculty and staff have sufficient resources to meet this standard. It is the responsibility of faculty and staff to adhere to and enact this standard.

**ALL NEEDLE STICK INJURIES ARE TO BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL.**

## 7.0 PROCEDURE

To reduce injuries from needle sticks, the Centers for Disease Control and NIOSH developed the following guide to selecting sharps disposal containers, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/sharps1.html>. The document is in PDF format for downloading. Please use this guide in selecting a sharps disposal container.

- (1) The principal investigator will use the CDC guide to select the appropriate sharps disposal container.
- (2) The principal investigator will ensure that the appropriate sharps disposal container is placed in the laboratory.
- (3) The principal investigator will develop a sharps disposal procedure specific for the hazards in their laboratories and communicate the procedure to their staff.
- (4) The sharps container will be autoclaved before a request to have the sharps container removed is sent to the Department of Health & Safety.
- (4i) Where the principal investigator can demonstrate that the sharps objects have not come in contact with human or animal body fluids, the sharps container removal request can be sent directly to the Department of Health & Safety without the sharps being autoclaved. Where there is even a possibility of sharps containing human or animal body fluids, Health Canada protocols require the sharps to be autoclaved before disposal.
- (5) A request to have the sharps container removed will be sent to the Department of Health & Safety, and the Department of Health & Safety will make arrangements with Memorial University's hazardous waste handler to pick up the sharps container. There will be lead time between the receipt of the request by the Department of Health & Safety and the removal of the sharps container by the hazardous waste handler.
- (6) **ALL NEEDLE STICK INJURIES ARE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY FOR MEDICAL ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT.**

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## **8.0 EVALUATION**

An annual review will be conducted for continuous improvement. If challenges arise from enactment of this standard, a review will be conducted to resolve the challenges.

## **9.0 COMMUNICATION**

All Deans, Directors, Managers, and other personnel with obligations for safely disposing of sharps objects were given the opportunity to comment before this standard was enacted.

**Legislative Reference: OH&S Act Section 5(a-d).**

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