EHS Guide: Requirements for Sharps Disposal

A. Definition of Sharps

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

- A Sharp May Be Any Type of Material
  - Glass or plastic pipettes and pipette tips.
  - Needles, syringes, knives, razor blades, metal shavings, etc.
  - Any broken glass, plastic, metal, pottery with sharp edges, etc.
  - Anything that could puncture through a garbage bag risking the bag to rupture and spill, or risking unexpected injury and exposure to custodial or cleanup personnel.

B. Disposal Requirements

Must be disposed per the KU Hazardous Materials/Waste Management Manual.

- Basic Packaging and Container Requirements
  - Some type of impermeable container is required for collecting and disposal of sharps. The common glass disposal boxes are considered sharps boxes for non-infectious sharps.
  - For medical or biological contaminated sharps, autoclavable containers are generally used.
  - For other radiation or chemical contaminated sharps, containers are dictated by disposal methods and protocols.
  - For non-contaminated sharps, containers are selected based on lab protocols and resources.

- Non-Contaminated Sharps
  - Non-Contaminated Sharps are a type of normal solid waste that is not specifically regulated for disposal, but require additional packaging and safety precautions prior to disposal.
    - Disposal requirements found in Section 1.5.1.4.

- Contaminated Sharps
  - Contaminated sharps require special disposal as either regulated or hazardous waste.
    - Radiosotope contamination requires disposal through EHS.
      - Disposal requirements may be found in Sections 4.5 through 4.9.
      - For assistance, contact EHS Radiation Safety Services – 864-2851

    - Biological/Infectious contamination requires decontamination prior to final disposal.
      - Disposal requirements may be found in Sections 3.5 through 3.7.
      - For assistance, contact EHS Biosafety Services – 864-2857

    - Chemical contamination requires disposal through EHS.
      - Disposal requirements may be found in Sections 2.6 through 2.8.
      - For assistance, contact EHS Hazardous Materials Service – 864-2853

C. Bloodborne Pathogens Program

Applies only to items that have come in contact with human blood, tissues, fluids, etc.

- See KU Bloodborne Pathogens Program for details.

D. Additional KU Lab Safety Manual (LSM) References Regarding Sharps

See Lab Safety Manual Sections for details:

- LSM Part 1 - 2.5.3.5 Practice Good Housekeeping.
- LSM Part 1 - 2.5.3.6 Dispose of all sharp objects in an EHS-approved container.
- LSM Part 1 - 6.2.1.4 Never place Non-Contaminated Sharps into normal trash receptacles unless properly packaged. (See referenced web page for details.)
- LSM Part 3 - 2.1.1.2 Special comments concerning “sharps” usage and disposal.