

Policy and Procedure Manual

SECTION: Joint Health & Safety		GUIDELINE #: JHS-020
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Authority: Joint Health & Safety Committee		

PURPOSE

The Town of Hanover (the Town) has adopted this guideline to ensure staff safely dispose of sharps and/or drug paraphernalia found in the community and to keep staff and community members safe. Sharps may contain blood, body fluids, or hazardous substances and must be treated as a health hazard and disposed of according to best practice recommendations.

GENERAL

Discarded sharps in public places is a challenge that many communities face. People use sharps for a variety of reasons. When sharps are discarded in a community, it is often a result of not having a place to properly dispose of them.

When a person finishes using a sharp, some of that person's blood may still be inside the needle or the syringe. If a person gets poked by another person's used needle and the blood goes into their bloodstream, they could get sick with infections like Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C. Most people will not get sick by picking up or getting poked by a used needle, but it is extremely important to be cautious.

Those who may come into contact with discarded sharps in the community through their work should have the knowledge and tools to be able to safely manage these situations.

DEFINITIONS

A sharp is any item that has corners, edges, or projections capable of cutting or piercing the skin. Examples of sharps include needles with attached syringes, lancets, auto-injectors, and razors. Drug paraphernalia such as cookers, filters, pipes, and alcohol swabs should also be treated as sharps and health hazards.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and Supervisors

Department Heads and Supervisors will ensure that staff who may come into contact with sharps, or who are responsible for the handling and disposal of sharps, are properly trained on safe sharps disposal.

Employees

Employees of the Town are required to participate in health and safety training, and adhere to all health and safety policies and safe work procedures, including reporting hazards related sharps.

PROCEDURE

Assess the site of found sharps/drug equipment

Prior to proceeding with safe sharps disposal, assess the site of the found sharp/drug equipment for potential health hazards including:

- a. Additional sharps and/or drug equipment in the area
- b. Environmental hazards such as ice, water, or fire
- c. Presence of unknown substance(s)

Safely dispose of found sharps/drug equipment

1. Obtain the required safe disposal materials:
 - a. Gloves
 - b. Tongs
 - c. Regulated sharps disposal container
2. Put gloves on for protection. Do not handle sharps with bare hands.
3. Ensure the sharps disposal container is nearby.
4. Use the tongs to pick up sharps, one at a time, with any sharp areas pointing/facing down. Do not handle sharps with hands. Do not attempt to recap or break needle tips off.
5. Place the sharp into the sharps disposal container with the sharp end first. Shut the lid.
6. Latch the lid of a full sharps disposal container and ensure it is in the locked position.
7. If using a vehicle, place the container in the rear of the vehicle.
8. Dispose of any single-use tongs. Clean and disinfect any reusable tongs.
9. Dispose of gloves and wash hands with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
10. Notify Supervisor and/or Department Head of the location of the found sharps and the action taken to remove and dispose of the sharps.

Compressing garbage

Sharps may be present within garbage unbeknownst to the person collecting the garbage, or may be created when garbage is compressed. Avoid compressing garbage within a bag or bin where possible. When compressing is necessary, wear gloves and use a tool to compress the garbage to avoid inadvertent injuries.

IN CASE OF SHARPS-RELATED INJURY

Upon injury and/or exposure to blood or bodily fluid from a known or unknown source, the injured person must adhere to the following procedures to minimize/eliminate the risk of infection or injury.

1. Encourage a needle-stick injury to bleed freely, then cleanse the area thoroughly with soap and water.
2. Irrigate areas affected by exposure to blood and/or bodily fluids immediately.
3. Apply a sterile, waterproof bandage.
4. Notify Supervisory staff immediately.
5. Proceed immediately to a primary health care provider or emergency department for assessment of the injury and required blood testing. Assistance in transporting the injured person is permitted.
6. Report the injury and/or hazardous situation immediately using the Employee Incident / Accident Reporting Form.
7. Complete WSIB reporting forms as required.